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THE

EARLY YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY.

LIFE & PRACTICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

THE

EARLY YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY:

A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

66861

BY

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TRANSLATED BY

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE appearance of this closing volume of my History of the First Three Centuries of the Christian Church has been long delayed, from causes which readers will readily understand. Its subject is the ecclesiastical, religious, and moral life of the Church in the second and third centuries. It contains, first, an account of the organisation of the Church, of its growth by means of the schools of catechumens, of its local institutions and discipline, of the bond of unity among the various sections of Christendom, and of the great conflict between the old spirit of liberty and the rising hierarchy. The invaluable documents now open to us, especially the "Constitution of the Church of Alexandria," discovered in the Coptic tongue a few years ago, and the "Philosophoumena," have given an entirely new aspect to the subject, and have enabled us to watch, as it were with our own eyes, the entire working of that organisation which so admirably combined order with liberty. Christian worship, so beautiful in its simplicity and spirituality in the second century, but undergoing a gradual transformation in the third, is the subject of the second part. The third and last treats of the great moral and social reformation wrought by

Christianity, first in the family, and afterwards in the institutions and customs of social life. It is a subject of peculiar interest, especially since the appearance in the last few years of several important works on the social conditions of ancient Rome, to determine what share is due to Stoicism in the modification and humanisation of Roman law, and how far its renovation is to be traced to the influence of Christianity.

It is impossible to read the history of the early ages of the Church without noticing how Christianity undergoes the same transformation in the three phases of its life—the ecclesiastical, the religious, and the moral. In all it is characterised at first by a deep spirituality, which imparts a grand unity to the whole. While every other form of religion, finding itself incapable of controlling and transfusing the entire life, had remained a thing apart, entrenched behind the barrier which divided the sacred from the profane, primitive Christianity made every man a priest, every home a sanctuary, and consecrated every day and every act of common life to the service of God. It was therefore directly opposed to the idea of a priestly class, or even of a sanctuary in the Jewish sense of the word, and repudiated the notion of an ascetic saintliness incompatible with family life. We shall show that all its primitive institutions are animated by this spirit; and shall show further how rapid and certain was its decline so soon as it lost sight of this great principle, whether in its ecclesiastical, social, or moral life. We shall have to trace the fatal steps by which, having once abandoned this sublime spirituality, it was led to restore the obsolete distinctions between sacred and profane, to set up a

new priesthood, a new ritualism, more or less Judaic, and a new ascetic standard of perfection. It is very important to note the gradual transitions out of which arose that powerful hierarchical system which became triumphant in the fourth century. The history of these transitions forms the subject of the closing portion of this work.

I have not written from a sectarian point of view. I have not endeavoured to find the Church to which I myself am attached in that great past which does not correspond exactly to any of the forms of the Christianity of our day. I have shunned any approach to controversy. But it remains indisputably evident that there is no trace whatever in the early ages of that powerful centralisation in which Ultramontanism glories. It is inconceivable to me where it could find a footing in a Church in which all the officers are elective, and whose various sections act with perfect independence, not receiving their commands from any superior power, and each preserving its individual freedom, while all holding in its essential unity the common faith. Cardinal Manning showed his wit and his prudence when he exclaimed that he hoped the Council would deliver us from history. I can well believe that history is a terribly embarrassing thing to his school, but it is not possible to silence this many-tongued witness. It is our part, as Christians of various shades of belief, and as intelligent thinkers, to listen to the voice of history, and not to make it speak our own words. Orthodoxy bows before the majesty of facts, and in this domain the only heresy is inaccuracy.

I do not pretend, however, to have treated this

history of primitive Christianity with that cold impartiality which excludes all sympathy. I feel myself essentially one with the disciples of the new religion, and it has been impossible to me to describe their ecclesiastical and religious life with the cold eye of a mere onlooker, though I have been careful not to give the blind admiration of the partisan. It is only by sympathy, I believe, that we can really understand this great movement, and appreciate its influence upon the destinies of the modern world. A dry catalogue of facts, or a minute analysis of ideas, is insufficient to make us apprehend its spirit. We need, as it were, to breathe the same fervid atmosphere in which these men fought one of the grandest battles of history; we need to know how they prayed before they fought and fell for their faith. The older I grow, the firmer is my conviction that the great truths they held were vital and eternal truths. This history, begun twenty years ago in the brave days of youth, has been interrupted by the hot struggles of public life in one of the most painful and difficult crises of our national history. I conclude it with a firmer persuasion than ever that the nineteenth century has as much need of the Christianity of the gospel as the first, and that our effort must be to rise above the petty systems in which eternal truth is often held captive by the Churches of our day, and to grasp it in its grand primeval type. It is only at such an altitude that religious faith and freedom of thought meet and coalesce.

E. DE PRESSENSÉ.

Paris, 1877

BOOK FIRST.

ECCLESIASTICAL LIFE IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND PRACTICE

IN THE

EARLY CHURCH.

BOOK FIRST.

ECCLESIASTICAL LIFE IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES.

CHAPTER I.

ADMISSION TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP—THE TRAINING OF THE CATECHUMENS—BAPTISM.

In the earlier volumes of this work we have traced the fruitful labours, sufferings, and conquests of the Church, and its controversy with obsolete doctrines; in a word, the great conflict between the old world and the new. We have further seen how Christian thought went on developing itself in the midst of many adverse influences, sometimes suffering indeed from alien contact, but in the end rising above all that would falsify its spirit or impede its progress. We enter in the present volume on the history of the organization of the Church, its government, worship, religious life, its various manifestations collective and individual, in the home and in the manifold relations of society.

This is the history of piety in its heroic age; it is also the history of the first deflections of religious thought. We shall discover in this sphere the same deleterious influences which we have already noted in the domain of doctrine, the same reactionary struggle of the old world to recover little by little, though it might never wholly reconquer, its lost ground. Error, whether practical or doctrinal, was however always held in check so long as the Church retained her liberty; in every new form it met with powerful opposition; the true spirit of Christianity never ceased to resist all which tended to vitiate or to enslave it. As a whole, the picture of the Christianity of the second and third centuries stands in striking contrast with that of the Church some centuries later.*

* Our principal authorities for the organization of the Churches at this period are, first, the writings of the contemporary Fathers, and next the "Apostolical Constitutions." Some explanations are necessary as to the composition, date, and authenticity of the latter work. We have first a collection in eight books, called the "Apostolical Constitutions." A careful study shows that these eight books form, in reality, three collections; the first composed of the first six books, the second of the seventh, and the third of the eighth, for all the three treat of the same subject. We have, besides, a fourth collection, namely, the Coptic edition of the "Constitutions of the Church of Alexandria," discovered by a learned Englishman named Tattam. The other collections exist both in Coptic and Greek text: the former is the more ancient. An attentive comparison of them has proved to us that the interpolations are all in support of sacerdotal and hierarchical ideas. We may refer further to the "Constitutions of the Church of Abyssinia," which are of a later date, since this Church was only founded in the fourth century; and to the "Constitutions of the Church of Antioch," in Syriac, not yet published. All these various collections treat of the discipline of the catechumens, of the government of the Church, and its worship, and contain directions for the religious life. This is an authority of the highest value. The date of the four principal collections of the "Apostolical Constitutions," without the interpolations, is anterior to the council of Nicæa, as is shown by the following passages: 1. Irenæus, "Fragment of Pfaff." It is agreed to apply to the "Constitutions" that which he says of the *δευτέραις τῶν ἀποστόλων διατάξεσι*. 2. Eusebius, "H.E.," iii. 25: *τῶν ἀποστόλων αἱ λεγόμεναι διδαχαί*. 3. Athanasius, "In Epistola Festali," 39 (vol. i. edit. Benedict.): *διδαχὴ καλουμένη τῶν ἀποστόλων*. 4. Epiphanius quotes them positively ("Hæres.," 45, 5; 70, 10;

§ 1.—*The Training of the Catechumens.*

We have already described the state of the Churches in the transition period. In theory, the constitution of the Church remained as it was in the time of the Apostle John. In fact, it had undergone various modifications, the natural result of the stern and awful crisis of persecution.

In the latter part of the second century, we find a new condition of things; the priestly ideas which, while the martyr-furnaces were blazing, were present

75, 6; 80, 7). We find also a quotation from the "Apostolical Constitutions" in the "Opus Imperfectum," ascribed to Chrysostom. (See "Ad. Matth." 6, 3, 25, 18.) The Council of Constantinople refers to them in the year 394 (Can. 74). From this period testimonies multiply. We will cite only Photius, who erroneously attributes them to Clement of Rome ("Bibliotheca," Can. 112, 113). It is then established that the "Apostolical Constitutions" existed in substance before the Council of Nicæa. The Reformation has shown too much disregard of them on account of its opposition to everything connected with tradition. If they cannot claim any value as apostolical authority, they are yet of considerable importance as an historical document, if only care be taken to remove the overlying strata of tradition. The "Apostolical Constitutions" have been formed as it were by alluvial deposits, upon a basis really belonging to the first century, but which has been gradually enriched or transmuted by that oral tradition, for which the Fathers were so eager, as we are told by Papias (Eusebius, "H. E.," iii. 39), and Irenæus ("Hæres." iii. 4). This original groundwork of the "Apostolical Constitutions" is found in our canonical writings, but being reproduced by oral tradition, when that was held in higher regard than even the letters of the apostles, it speedily became surcharged with glosses in which we see the reflection of the successive changes made in the primitive organization of the Church. The Epistles of the Apostles are never quoted in the "Apostolical Constitutions," because these are considered as replacing them with fuller developments. Nevertheless, we find in their essential portions a nucleus of apostolic texts around which the new formations were grouped. The Pastoral Epistles are evidently the original woof and warp of the "Apostolical-Constitutions." These have grown out of the primitive type somewhat as the Apostles' Creed has been developed out of the baptismal formula. Only the changes having been more numerous and more rapid in the organization than in the doctrine of the Church, tradition has been allowed much freer scope in this domain. We have two recent editions of the "Apostolical Constitutions." 1. That of Ultzen (Rostock, 1853). 2. That which Bunsen has given in the second volume of his "Analecta Antenicæna." We cite the text of the latter, because the interpolations are carefully marked.

only like metal in a state of fusion, now take a more decided and definite form. Considerable progress has been made towards the idea of a hierarchy, though no Church as yet claims authority over another, and we are still very far from that centralization which is the essential of a visible Catholic unity. The warm breath and grand impulse of zeal and liberty which animated the creative period of the Church has not yet grown cold; and while it still breathes in her institutions, the idea of a false and fictitious unity will have but little power.

We shall commence with the period extending from the year 220 to the beginning of the third century. Prior to that date the organization of the Church had not undergone any radical alteration. But from this time we find the hierarchical tendency asserting itself triumphantly. We shall have to note the causes which produced this change, and the struggles (far more severe than is generally supposed) by which it was preceded.

The essential feature by which the institutions of the Church of the second century were characterised was this: they demanded of all its members a distinct confession of the faith, and claimed the right to watch that their conduct did not belie their creed. We might deem that persecution would have been alone sufficient to separate the chaff from the wheat, and that hasty and ill-considered membership was but little to be feared in a time when the name of Christian was a title of opprobrium and peril. Primitive Christianity had not been satisfied however with this barrier raised by its enemies between it and the pagan world; it

sought in its own institutions, apart from circumstances which might change, a guarantee against the intrusion of the indifferent or hypocritical. It felt that it was not like the old theocracy which comprehended all the sons of Abraham, and marked them indistinctly by an outward sign. Initiation into the fellowship of Christians was not by natural birth, but by what the sacred writings call the new birth, that formation of the new heart and the right spirit which no ceremony can avail to produce, and which was not inherited by blood. "Non nascuntur sed fiunt Christiani." This great saying of Tertullian is the soul of the ecclesiastical organization of the second century. The Church does not plant a hedge about herself as the Rabbi does around his cherished tradition, repudiating all free inquiry; she would only, according to the beautiful figure of Isaiah, defend the mystical vine from all unhallowed contact. This is the true meaning of the severe discipline and lengthened and laborious process of initiation to which her proselytes are subjected. We shall find that what seems at the first glance an abridgment of liberty, is in truth its best safeguard; clerical despotism will be able to prevail only when the doors of the Church have been forced by a mixed multitude. These, being themselves indifferent to the true interests of the Christian life, are incapable of sharing in the government of a religious body; they will therefore gladly free themselves from a burdensome responsibility by casting it on their leaders. The hierarchy gains strength in proportion as living piety declines. On the other hand, a Church composed of earnest, active Christians, well instructed in divine things, is a self-governing Church; it does not

surrender to any the conduct of its highest interests, which it regards no less than sacred obligations; its rights and its duties go hand in hand, and the former are forfeited only as the latter are neglected. A saintly life cannot be servile. Primitive Christianity preserved its sacred liberty so long as it defended itself against the intrusion of foreign elements, and its stern discipline proved the strongest bulwark of its independence. Thus so long as every Christian believed himself to be a priest of Christ, no special priesthood could interfere between him and heaven. The true worshipper of the living God stands erect in presence of every human dignitary, and is intolerant of the usurpations of man just in proportion to his reverent submission to the authority of God.

Of all the institutions of the ancient Church, the most important was that for training catechumens, because it determined the conditions of Church membership. In this early period, when the primary necessity is to fight and conquer, the Church is not exposed to the temptations of peaceful and ordinary times, when it is apt to become confounded with general society. It receives fresh adherents now only by direct discipling; souls must be gained one by one, and detached from their old life to be adopted into the new. The Church has not to deal now, as subsequently, with a young generation, which it may mould by an education begun in the cradle. Its proselytes come from every quarter of the pagan world; from the ranks of an army in which military service is permeated with idolatrous practices; from the deep degradation of a life of slavery; from the marts of idol traffic; from the thousand trades which purvey to the pleasures of a great city; sometimes also

from the palaces or villas of a corrupt aristocracy. These are the rough, unhewn, deeply-discoloured stones, which the Church is to cut, polish, and engrave with her own impress, before they can be built into the living temple she is rearing for God. This image, borrowed from the visions of the "Pastor Hermas," is a faithful representation of the discipline of the catechumens. The "Apostolical Constitutions," confirmed by the Fathers of that period, give us a complete picture of this institution which exercised the fervent and untiring zeal of the Church.

The proselyte presenting himself for the first time at the door of the Church for admission, is subjected to a preliminary examination before entering on the course of catechetical instruction. The pearls of truth are not to be cast before the profane; mere mental curiosity is not deemed sufficient to qualify for their exalted teachings; it must be shown that the seeker estimates truth at its real value, and regards it not as a mere amusement for the intellect, but as the rule of life. This Divine knowledge can only be acquired by purified hearts, as the Master Himself has testified. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Its light is not the cold gleam of an abstract philosophy, it is a flame to consume inward defilement. None is admitted as a candidate for this Divine knowledge unless he show himself willing to renounce all that is incompatible with so high a calling. Undertaken on any other conditions, such study would prove vain and sterile; for in order to know if the doctrine of Christ is of God, it is essential to begin by doing His will.*

* John vii. 17.

Obedience is the starting-point of all religious knowledge. The whole moral teaching of St. John, and of the Fathers of Alexandria, is embodied in the first rule laid down for the catechumen, and thus expressed in the most ancient of the "Apostolical Constitutions."

"That those who come for the first time to hear the Divine word be brought to those who are appointed to teach, before the Christian community assembles, and that they be asked what has led them to the faith; that the Christians by whom they are brought testify that they are competent to hear the Divine word, and that they know their conduct and manner of life."* Indecision is not allowed; it is not possible to stand with one foot in either camp when the Church has once been taken as the guide in the way of truth.

Purity of life is the first condition required. "Let it be known if the candidate is married: if he is not, let him learn to renounce all unlawful license; let him be chastely married, or live in continence according to the commandment. †

The examination of candidates is peculiarly severe in all that affects their relations with paganism. They are to abandon every idolatrous practice, and all trades connected with the making of idols; they are to abstain from what the Church calls *theatromania*—all those scenic games which are fatally debased by the impure legends of mythology. The interpretation of dreams, and magical arts, are no less expressly forbidden. A

* Οἱ πρώτως προσιόντες τῇ καινῇ πίστει ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον. . . τὰς αἰτίας ἐξεταζέσθωσαν οὗ χάριν προςῆλθον τῇ πίστει· οἱ τε προσενεγκόντες μαρτυρείτωσαν αὐτοῖς; εἰ ἐυνατοί εἰσιν ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον. "Const. Eccles. Egypt." (Coptic), ii. 40; Bunsen, "Antenicæna," vol. ii.

† "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 40.

slave is to bear a good report from his master, and if a master holds any dignity or office which renders conformity to pagan practices necessary, he is called on to resign it before he can take his place side by side with his slave on the catechumens' bench. Military service is only sanctioned when compulsory.*

The proselyte, having been once admitted to the instruction of the Church, is required to go through the whole course, which lasts three years, unless he can give, in a shorter time, proofs of adequate knowledge; for "it is not the time which is of moment, but the change of the life." † Teaching is given to the catechumens before the hour of worship. The public profession of their faith which they are called to make at the time of baptism, enables us to determine the object and the nature of this teaching. It is evident that in this profession they only sum up that which they have received from the lips of their Christian teachers. We find that the course of instruction was divided into three parts, corresponding to the three years of its duration. The first was devoted to laying firmly the basis of all religious teaching by developing the idea of the true God, who is at once the Ruler and the Father of all beings.‡ It was needful, on the one hand, to establish the idea of a personal God, in opposition to the pantheism in which pagan speculation terminated; and on the other hand to guard against another prevalent form of error which exalted the First Principle into such a transcendental sphere that He became a sort of meta-

* "Const. Egypt." ii. 41.

† Τρία ἔτη κατηχείσθω, οὐχ ὁ χρόνος, ἀλλ' ὁ τρόπος κρίνεται. Ibid. ii. 42.

‡ Τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν τὸν πατέρα. Ibid. ii. 46.

physical nonentity, incapable of exerting any direct influence upon the world.

In its second division, the catechetical teaching was directed to the doctrine of Christ, His eternal relation to the Father as the only Son, and His redeeming work as the Saviour.* It was that slubime philosophy of the Word which had been so magnificently treated at Alexandria. Lastly, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was set forth. He was represented as the vivifying principle, imparting Divine life to the soul.† We see that the whole teaching turned upon the Christian theodicy, the Divine Persons being regarded rather in their active operation in the work of redemption than in their essence and mysterious mutual relation. There was no attempt as yet at the subtle metaphysics of Nicæa. God was presented successively as Father, as Saviour, and as life-giving Spirit, but the Trinitarian formulæ were not insisted upon. The catechetical instruction was marked throughout by a practical character, opposed to all philosophical abstraction.

A large place was given to the history of revelation, which was unfolded according to the three great manifestations of the Divine operation in the world. God was made known as the Creator by means of a comprehensive historical picture of the origin of the world, of the creation of man, and of the principal providential dispensations, which, from the patriarchal age to the close of the pagan era, had in various ways prepared the race of Adam to rise from the vanity of error to the knowledge of the truth, and from the dominion of evil

* Τὸν μονογεν.ῆ αὐτοῦ υἱὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν κύριον καὶ σωτῆρα ἡμῶν. "Const. Egypt." ii. 46.

† Τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τὸ ζωοποιοῦν. Ibid. ii. 47.

into liberty. Next followed an exposition of the incarnation of the only Son, and of His redemptive work, wrought out for the remission of sins, the illumination of men's minds, and the purification of their hearts.* The life-giving operation of the Holy Spirit was connected in the most natural manner with the exposition of the regenerative consequences of salvation. This led on to the teaching of Christian ethics, properly so called. We find a very complete epitome of these in the introduction to the "Coptic Constitutions." † This is unquestionably one of the most beautiful portions of the catechetical instruction as it was imparted at Alexandria. It is the sublime morality of the gospel, as far removed as possible from a timid casuistry.

It is easy to discover from this document that the Decalogue formed the basis of this moral teaching, but the Decalogue marvellously enlarged and spiritualised. In the first place, the entire system of morality was brought under one ruling principle—love. That which was the crown and topstone of the Mosaic law was here made the foundation. "We must choose between the way of death and the way of life. Love is life.‡ The great commandment of Deuteronomy, which does not divide the love we owe to God from that which is due to our neighbour, laid down particular precepts and bound them together. These various precepts were now not simply formulated, they were illuminated by the profound psychology of the gospel, which deals with the secret source of evil. Murder is present germinally in the movement of hatred or envy, which no human eye can

* "Const. Apost." vii. 39. † "Const. Egypt." i. 1–13.

‡ Ὁδοὶ δύο εἰσί, μία τῆς ζωῆς καὶ μία τοῦ θανάτου. ἡ ὁδὸς τῆς ζωῆς ἐστιν αὕτη. ἀγαπήσεις. "Const. Eccl. Egypt." i. 2.

discern. Adultery is incipient in lust. Wrath and evil desire are two terrible demons, striving with one another for the mastery of the soul, taking possession of it as of the house swept and garnished of the parable, and impeding its contemplation of the truth. From their fatal union results the perdition of the soul.* Are they not in truth the two poles of egoism, which is equally culpable, whether it uses another as a vile instrument of pleasure, or removes him violently out of the way. These two demoniacal passions were the curse of the old pagan world, and had assumed hideous forms, which the Christian moralist denounces with an unsparing boldness like that of Paul.† He attaches great importance to the sins of the lip, because he knows that, according to the Bible expression, the tongue kindles in men's hearts a great fire of anger and evil passions. The speech of Christians is to be gentle as it is pure. "Say no evil against thy neighbour; hate no man; protect some; pity others; pray for them and love them as thine own soul. Avoid evil expressions, for of these things come adulteries."‡

The catechist naturally dwells at length on the subject of incantations, sorceries, explanation of dreams, and that art of divination which was so closely linked with idolatry.§ This formed a very important chapter in the moral system, which was as practical as it was sublime. Lying was denounced with no less rigour, as opening the way for the fraudulent spirit, and thus for all manner of robbery and wrong.‖

"The duties of man towards God, which belong to the

* "Const. Egypt." i. 4, 6. † Ibid. i. 4.
‡ Ibid. i. 9, 7. § Ibid. i. 8. ‖ Ibid. i. 9.

sphere of piety properly so called, were treated in the following precepts. "Be full of gentleness, for the meek shall inherit the earth. Be patient; live in peace; be pure in heart; do not lift up thyself; walk not with the proud, but with the upright and the lowly. Accept as a good everything that happens to thee, for all is of God." * Respect and love towards the pastors of the Church are strongly enjoined. The counsels of St. Paul on this subject received careful comment. "Honour them with the sweat of thy brow, and with the labour of thy hands." † The duty of avoiding division and schisms is not forgotten in this time of heresies innumerable. ‡ That which is especially admirable in this moral teaching is the profound recognition of the equality of men, as established by the gospel: of this, Christian charity is made the guardian. "Show no respect of persons when thou hast a rebuke to administer, for before God, wealth, dignity, beauty, are of no account; all are equal before Him." § The Christian is only to remember the inequalities of social life in order to obliterate them. "Let not thy hand be wide open to receive, and closed to give. Turn not thou away from the needy, but share with him whatever thou hast. If ye share in common those things which are incorruptible, how should ye not do it in the things that are corruptible." ‖

Thus in the Christian Church and at the family hearth was inaugurated that great change which was destined to abolish all the unjust assumptions and glaring inequalities of social life. This morality, at

* "Const. Egypt." i. 9. † Ibid. i. 10. ‡ Ibid. i. 11.
§ Ἰσότης ἐστὶ πάντων παρ' αὐτῷ. Ibid. i. 11. ‖ Ibid. i. 11.

once so lofty and so practical, found its sanction in those words of the apostles which had been their watch-word. "The day of the Lord is at hand." "He will come and render to every man according to his work." *

The catechist contented himself with teaching these principles of the new life, and in order to show to his disciple that he did not lay upon him the yoke of any code or ritual, he referred him to the holy Scriptures and to his own conscience, leaving him to deduce for himself the consequences of their teaching. He treated him as a freeman of Christ, who stood in no further need of direction. "Be," he said, "your own counsellors, your own teachers." † It would have been impossible to mark more clearly the inauguration of the law of liberty written in the hearts, and differing so widely from the law of the letter graven upon stone.

The teaching of the catechumens varied in measure and fulness according to the place and circumstances in which they were found. We know that it was not the same in a country Church and a Church in the town; we know too that it was far less scientific at Rome than at Alexandria. In the latter city, it was carried to the highest point of scientific culture. There arose a true apologetic school, in which it was not deemed enough to expound Christian doctrines, but in which the attempt was made to show the correspondence of these doctrines with the requirements of thought, and to harmonize them with the best aspirations of the old world. We can form an idea of the importance which the Church attached to the instruction of its catechumens, when we see such men as Clement and Origen

* "Const. Egypt." i. 12. † Ἑαυτῶν γίνεσθε σύμβουλοι. Ibid. i. 12.

undertaking this office, and glorying in the name of catechists. The example of Origen, who presided over this teaching long before he received any ecclesiastical office, confirms the very remarkable provision of the "Apostolical Constitutions," according to which laymen might be called to fulfil this high trust.* The ancient Church attached far more importance to intellectual competency than to official dignity for such a work, for she was far removed as yet from imagining that Christians are made by a rite, and that supposed sacramental grace supplies all deficiencies. She believed firmly that Christians must be without exception "taught directly of God," according to the beautiful formula of the "Apostolical Constitutions,"† and consequently that there is no caste or order for the impartation of truth.

The probation of the catechumens was divided into two principal periods, forming as it were two grades of Christian instruction. In the first, the candidates were regarded as standing on the threshold of the Church; they could take no part in its worship, and were required to leave before the reading of the gospel. This barrier was only removed on the very eve of their baptism, at the close of the three years of instruction which had been imposed on them. They were then submitted to a fresh examination, having reference especially to their conduct. It was inquired if they had lived in chastity, if they had honoured widows, and succoured the poor. It was only after this examination that they were permitted to hear the reading of the gospel, while they

* Ὁ διδάσκαλος εἴτε ἐκκλησιαστὴς ὤν, εἴτε λαϊκός. "Const. Egypt." ii. 44.
† Ἔσονται γὰρ πάντες διδακτοὶ θεοῦ. "Const. Apost." viii. 47.

were not yet allowed to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist. *

When the moment came for the body of catechumens to retire, the catechist, whether cleric or layman, blessed them, and presented to God, in the name of the Church, a prayer in their behalf. Chrysostom has handed down to us that which was used at Antioch in his day, and which clearly belongs in substance to the preceding period. This prayer shows how deeply the catechumen was supposed to feel his responsibility, and in how awful and solemn a light the act of entering the Church was regarded. We subjoin this prayer. "Let us pray," said the catechist, "for the catechumens, hat God, who is all love and mercy, may listen to their prayer; that He may open the ear of their heart, and that they may perceive that which eye has never seen nor ear heard, neither hath the heart of man conceived. May He teach them the words of piety, and sow in them the heavenly seeds. May He strengthen their faith, reveal to them the gospel of Divine blessedness: may He give them spiritual understanding, a pure mind, a spotless life. Let us pray yet more earnestly that they may be kept from every evil and impious act, and that they may be rendered worthy of the washing of regeneration and the pardon of their sins. May God bless their coming in and going out; their whole life, their houses, their families. May He bless their children, and spare them to them: may He give them wisdom, and order all things for their greatest good." †

After this prayer the catechumens rise at the bidding

* "Const. Egypt." ii. 45.
† Chrysostom, "Homilia," ii. de ep. 2 ad Corinth.

of the deacon. "Pray," the catechist says to them, "that the angel of peace grant you to fulfil all in peace. Pray that peace may be your portion this day, and all the days of your life, and that yours may be a Christian end. Commend yourselves to the living God, and to His Spirit. Bow the head." The benediction is then pronounced upon them, and the whole assembly says, Amen.

§ 2.—*Admission into the Church by Baptism.*

After three years of instruction the catechumen whose testimonials are all good is ready for baptism.* Again he is made the subject of a careful examination, for the Church demands all the guarantees possible to assure her that she is not about to receive an intruder, but a faithful member of the mystical body. It is again the conduct which is made the subject of severest scrutiny, for on points of doctrine the Church is satisfied with the public profession which accompanies baptism. That which is sought in the catechumen is not a mere form of words, but a living and acting faith, evidenced by purity of life and works of charity. It is on this account that three examinations are made to precede the baptism of the neophyte.

In order to comprehend aright the ordinance of baptism as then administered, we must bear in mind the wide difference between the Church of this epoch and that of modern Christendom, the latter gathering its adherents almost everywhere by right of birth, so that we are accustomed to designate as Christian people those who live within certain degrees of latitude and

* "Const. Egypt." ii. 45.

longitude. Religious statistics thus become a matter of geography. Baptism is little more than a semi-civil rite, distinctive rather of nationality than of faith. We hear even in these days of baptized nations, and the Europe of the eighteenth century was called Christian Europe. These anomalies arise from the fact that the baptism of infants, which was the exception in the second century, has become the rule since the confusion of the Church with the Empire. It is unquestionable that infant baptism is to be traced back as far as the period we are now considering, though, as we have already shown, it is impossible to prove its apostolic origin.* In the second and third centuries we find it the practice of all the Churches; the protests of Tertullian are alone sufficient evidence of this fact. Nevertheless, it is equally obvious that there is a wide difference between its significance, when it occupies a secondary place in the institutions of the Church, and when it is made, as has been the case since the fifth century, a factor of primary importance. When baptism is regarded chiefly as the means of introducing the rising race into the Church, it misrepresents the true character of Christianity in two respects. First: It makes Christianity only a new development of Judaism, a religion transmitted by inheritance, and linked with a family name, instead of having for its basis a personal faith. Second: It tends to transform the grace of God into a sacramental and magical grace working independently of the moral agent himself, since a new-born child cannot be a moral agent. The case was altogether different when the rule, or at least

* "Early Years of Christianity," vol. i. "The Apostolic Age." Note, p. 337

the prevailing practice in the Church, was the baptism of the catechumen after lengthened instruction and trial. The magical operation of the sacrament vanishes as the moral activity is brought into play. The baptism of children, if it is practised at all under such circumstances and in the midst of such influences, is no longer regarded as a sacrament producing of itself—*ex opere operato*—divine life. It is simply a consecration of the child to God, an anticipation of future action on its part which in no way destroys the necessity of personal faith. The liturgical form used in connection with it declares the necessity of such faith. Moreover, so long as the baptism of the adult catechumen is the rule, the religious community cannot be confounded with the civil, nor can its membership be supposed to rest upon any mere accident of birth or custom.

The essential feature of the institutions of the second and third centuries is this very predominance of the baptism of adult catechumens with their foregoing training. The preparatory training is a sieve which separates the chaff from the wheat. Baptism is not a wide open door, through which unconverted multitudes are admitted into the Church by virtue of a rite and a formulary. Distinguished as it is from the Jewish baptism of proselytes by its character of universality, so that, like the religion it symbolises, it belongs to mankind, and not to any particular nationality, the ordinance is nevertheless observed as one of the mysteries of the faith. It is no longer administered in public, as in the preceding period; it is not to be regarded as a spectacle; but as a secret initiation into

the Church, of which the faithful alone are witnesses. In this way the idea was most clearly expressed that baptism is the privilege only of those who have given pledges of their faith. All this will be changed when the idea of sacramental efficacy becomes paramount, and the baptism of infants is adopted as the rule, instead of the careful preparatory discipline preceding membership in the early age of the Church. The sacrament will become public when it is administered indiscriminately to a multitude having no qualification but that of birth, instead of to those only who have undergone the rigorous training of catechumens.

The manner in which baptism is spoken of by the Fathers of the early ages indicates that, for the most part, they attached to it this character of a voluntary and well-considered espousal of the religion of Christ, without excluding the mysterious operation of Divine grace, which works upon human volition and by it. Some of the terms applied to it have reference to the form of the rite. The word baptism itself, which signifies dipping, points to the immersion of the neophyte. The sacrament is sometimes called simply the *water*,* or the "washing," or the "fountain." These expressions have a mystical sense beyond their natural meaning. The Apostle Paul speaks of the "washing of regeneration," and there are other similar expressions in Holy Writ.† Baptism is often called "an anointing," in allusion to one of the rites observed in connection with it, and especially pointing to the great idea of the

* "Sacramentum aquæ." Tertull. "De baptismo," 1.

† Justin Martyr, "Apol." i. 61; Clement of Alex. "Pædag." i. 6; Titus iii. 5.

universal priesthood, as says St. Jerome, "Baptism is the priesthood of the laity."* It is called again "the seal of God," to mark that he who has received it is no longer his own. The spiritual character of the ordinance is brought out by such expressions as these: "the gift of God," † "*illumination*," "spiritual birth," ‡ or "*enrolment*." § The frequent use of the words "mystery" and "initiation" show how it was regarded in the early ages.

The celebration of baptism was one of the most imposing ceremonies of the ancient Church. It appears to have been very simple in the first thirty years of the second century, up to the time of Justin Martyr. In the picture which he draws for us, we can trace, indeed, all the essential forms of the rite, but they are not yet fixed by rigid rule, nor is there any recognition of priestly authority. Its celebration is not as yet strictly private. "Those," says Justin, "who are fully persuaded that what we have taught them is in accordance with the truth, and who have devoted themselves to a Christian life, are invited to seek of God, with fasting and prayer, the pardon of the sins they have committed, and we also fast and pray with them. We then lead them to a place where we find water, and they receive their regeneration as we received ours; for they are plunged into the water in the name of God the Father and Sovereign of all things which exist, of Jesus Christ our Saviour, and of the Holy Ghost." ‖ Baptism thus

* "Sacerdotium laici id est baptisma." Hieron. "Dial. adv. Lucifer," c. 2.
† Gregor. Naz. "Oratio," 40. ‡ Clement of Alex. "Pædag." i. 6.
§ "Census Dei." Tertull. "De baptismo," c. 17. See, in reference to these various terms describing baptism, Augustine's "Archæology," ii. 309 and following. ‖ Justin Martyr, "Apol." i. 61.

regarded cannot be supposed to signify actual regeneration. No magical operation is ascribed to it, and this identification of the sign with the thing signified in expressions which are perhaps unguarded, can be of no weight. The neophyte is already spiritually renewed when he comes to the baptismal stream. He has confessed his faith and has declared himself capable of entering on the new life, which implies that he is already a partaker of it. Justin Martyr brings him before us as prepared by serious preliminary instruction for the solemn act of dedication. For that act no particular time was fixed; faith was the great prerequisite; nor was any special place assigned for the observance. The neophyte is baptized in any adjoining water, as was the case with Lydia, the seller of purple, converted under St. Paul at Philippi. Lastly we read of no officiating priest, since no such class as yet exists. The whole Church presides over the baptism of the catechumen, fasting and praying with him, though its elders and deacons appear taking part in the ceremony as its representatives. Justin Martyr, himself a layman, speaks in his own name as in that of all his brethren when he says: "We lead the catechumens to a place where there is water."* Immersion, and the benediction in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, seem to have been the sole rites of baptism at this period. It still retained its primitive character.

It was towards the end of the second century and the commencement of the third, that baptism was placed under more fixed rules, and received the addition of symbolical elements which were in accordance with the

* *Ἀγονται ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἐνθα ὕδωρ ἐστι.* Justin Martyr, "Apol." i. 61.

taste of the time and the poetic genius of the East, especially in that Egyptian Church which supplies us on this, as on so many others subjects, with the most complete and authentic documentary evidence. We shall take from the "Coptic Constitution," supplemented by the other Apostolic Constitutions and the writings of the contemporary Fathers, our description of baptism as it was celebrated before Nicæa, in the times of Tertullian and Origen.

Two august days in the year are set apart for baptism. It is to be celebrated either in the great Easter vigil, in the night of the Sabbath commemorative of the crucifixion, or on the eve of Pentecost.* These two festivals point indeed in a special manner to the Divine realities of which baptism is the sign. Is it not at once a death and a renewal, a mystical identification with Christ crucified and risen? Does not a new Pentecostal fire light upon the neophyte who is baptized of water and of the Spirit? At a later period Epiphany was also chosen for the celebration of baptism, for the reason that the new life is a birth of Christ in us. Of course this determination of certain solemn days for baptism refers only to the public celebration before the Church. It was always allowed that in case of any serious obstacle or of illness, the rite might be administered in the house, and at any time.† The part assigned to the clergy in the ceremony naturally occupies a more prominent place now than in the time of Justin Martyr. This could not be otherwise; it

* "Diem baptismo solemniorem Pascha præstat. Exinde Pentecoste ordinandis lavacris latissimum spatium est." Tertull. "De baptismo," 19.

† "Omnis dies Domini est, omnis hora, omne tempus habile baptismo." Ibid. 49.

was the necessary consequence of the progress of sacerdotal notions, which we shall have to follow and to estimate when we come to treat of the government of the Church. The bishop, at the beginning of the third century, is a very different personage from the bishop of the previous age, although his prerogative is not yet formally and officially established. He is aided by the elders. In the Churches where the hierarchical degrees are clearly determined, the deacons and deaconesses assist the neophytes in the various stages of the baptismal ceremony. In spite, however, of the decline from the primitive liberty of the Church, baptism was never considered as belonging exclusively to the clergy, and the right of the laity to administer it in exceptional cases is explicitly stated.* The ordinance was no longer observed, as formerly, in any place where a stream of water might be found. The Church began to have, if not sanctuaries, at least spacious places of worship in the great towns. In these baptism was administered to the converts collectively. Sometimes a piscina was arranged, into which the water ran by a channel formed for the purpose.† Baptisteries, properly so called, date only from the age succeeding this.

When the great vigil commences on the evening of the day when the Church, dissolved in tears, watches, like the Virgin at the Cross, in adoring contemplation of the dying Saviour, the catechumens assemble in the building used for worship—a building not as yet distinguished by any peculiar form of architecture. The

* "Baptismum dandi habet jus summus sacerdos, qui est episcopus, dehinc presbyter et diaconi non tamen sine episcopi auctoritate propter ecclesiæ honorem. Alioquin etiam laicis jus est." Tertullian, "De baptismo," c. 17.

† "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 46.

men are separated from the women. "Kneel," says the bishop, "and pray!" The assembly bows in silence. Then the bishop extends his hands over the kneeling multitude, and pronounces the words of the first exorcism, designed to chase away the evil spirits, from whose dominion these converted pagans have been so lately rescued.* It is well known that the primitive Church regarded paganism as the peculiar domain of the demons. We have seen how important a part Justin Martyr assigns to them in the great conflict of redemption. In the eyes of the Christians engaged in the mighty struggle with the ancient world, possession by evil spirits is no longer, as in the time of Christ, the morbid condition of certain individuals; the whole of paganism is in their view possessed of Satan, and every one who has in any way belonged to paganism needs to be delivered from this dominion of the powers of darkness. Hence the necessity of exorcism, which is effected by prayer and not by a magical form. Having thus first exorcised, the bishop breathes upon the catechumens, as Jesus did upon His disciples on the evening of the resurrection in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, saying to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Then he touches with his finger the forehead, nostrils, and ears of the neophytes. The sign of the cross seems to have been early adopted in place of this ceremonial.†

Such is the inauguration of the baptismal vigil. The

* Ἐξορκιζέτω πᾶν ξένον πνεῦμα. "Const. Egypt." ii. 45.

† Cyprian thus speaks of the baptised: "Qui renati et signo Christi signati fuerint." "Ad Demetrian." c. 22. "Muniatur frons ut signum Dei incolume servetur." "Epist." 58, 9. Ἡ σφραγὶς ἀντὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ. "Const. Apost." iii. 17.

entire night is passed in prayers, in exhortations, and public confessions of past sins, for repentance is the true preparation for baptism. The catechumens may take no other food than a morsel of bread which they have brought with them for the eucharistic meal. This is the first time they have been allowed to take part in that sacrament, and this is the sign of their new dignity.*

Hardly has the cock crowed with the earliest dawn, when water is poured into a basin. A prayer is offered, probably to bless the water, as is the custom still in all the Churches over the bread and wine of the Eucharist. † It was upon this perfectly simple and becoming practice that the superstition of sacramental grace only too readily seized. At this moment the bishop or elder, for in the Coptic document both names and offices are used interchangeably, pronounces words of benediction over a vessel filled with oil, which is thenceforward called the oil of the Eucharist. Then another vessel also filled with oil is brought to him: this will be called the vessel of exorcism, when the bishop has pronounced over it the formulæ for driving out the demons. One deacon holds the first vessel on his right, another holds the second on his left. The bishop or elder calls each of the catechumens separately before him, and requires him to renounce the evil spirit. "I renounce," says the neophyte, "thee, Satan, thy service and thy works." These words having been spoken, the bishop anoints the catechumen with the oil of exorcism, saying in a loud voice, "Let every

* "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 45; Tertullian, "De baptismo," 20.
† "Const. Egypt." ii. 46.

evil spirit depart from thee."* This ceremony of exorcism is not described in our most ancient documents. Tertullian speaks only of the renunciation by the catechumen of Satan and his works. It is easy to see how this renunciation might naturally lead to exorcism properly so called. It was regarded as setting the neophyte free from the mysterious power which was felt on every hand, even in the air men breathed. This deliverance was marked by an expressive symbol. Had not St. James said that the elders of the Church were to anoint the sick man with oil, praying over him? Now what sickness more terrible than possession in any form? The origin then of this symbolical act is clearly traceable to an apostolic usage modified in its application.

After this ceremony the men are conducted by the deacon to the baptismal water. They are divested of their garments, for they are to enter the new life unclothed, as they entered on their earthly existence. The women, who are baptized after the men, loose their hair and take off their ornaments of silver and gold, for no one may take a strange garment into the water.† They are assisted by a deaconess. The catechumens are dipped three times.‡ The deacon or deaconess goes down with them into the water, and helps them to make the solemn declaration of faith which alone entitles them to baptism. "I believe

* Λέγων ὅτι πᾶν πνεῦμα μακρυνθῇ ἀπὸ σοῦ. "Const. Egypt." ii. 64. Cyprian, "Epist." 69, 15.

† "Nudi in sæculo nascimur, nudi etiam accedimus ad lavacrum." Ambrosius, "Sermo" xx. Μηδεὶς ξένον τι εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ φερέτω. "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 46.

‡ "Non semel, sed ter." Tertullian, "Adv. Prax." c. 26; "De corona milit." c. 3.

in the only true God, the Father Almighty, and in His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and in the Holy Spirit, the Quickener, and in the life everlasting."* "I believe thus," repeats the neophyte, three times. After this solemn declaration he is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.† He then comes up out of the water, into which he has been three times dipped and blessed by the bishop. Even this is not enough; the bishop or elder demands a yet more explicit confession of his faith. "Dost thou believe," he says, "in our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God the Father, that He became man in a wonderful manner for us, in an incomprehensible unity, by His Holy Spirit, of Mary the holy Virgin, without the seed of man? Dost thou believe that He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and died of His own will once for our redemption? Dost thou believe that He rose on the third day, loosing the bonds of death, and ascended up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of his good Father on high, and that He cometh again to judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom? Dost thou believe in the Holy Good Spirit, and Quickener, who wholly purifieth in the holy Church?" The catechumen is to answer again in a loud voice, "I

* "Const. Egypt." ii. 46.

† Ibid. ii. 46. The formula of baptism is still that which Justin Martyr has handed down. The Fathers of the first three centuries identify it with the words of the institution of the ordinance, Matt. xxviii. 19. See Tertullian, "De Baptisme," 6; Cyprian, "Epist." 73, 18. Several modifications are, however, traceable in the baptismal formula. Sometimes the *ἐπ' ὀνόματος* is omitted, as in the 49th Apostolic Canon, where we find *εἰς πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον πνεῦμα*. Comp. Tertullian, "Adv. Prax." 26. Elsewhere the formula is thus epitomised: "In nomine Christi." Photius, "Bibliotheca," cod. 280. See Cyprian, "Epist." 73, 17

believe." Then the bishop or elder takes the oil of the Eucharist, which a deacon holds on his right hand, and anoints the neophyte, saying these words: "I anoint thy forehead with this holy oil in the name of Jesus Christ."* Henceforth the new Christian belongs unreservedly to the Church, and shares in all its privileges. He has become truly a priest of Christ, and in order to mark fully his priestly dignity, he is called, on coming up out of the baptismal water, himself to repeat the Lord's Prayer.† The Church thus recognises him as a king and priest, according to the beautiful saying of Peter. He is no more common or profane; he is the minister and organ of the body of believers, while yet submitting himself freely to its organisation. Those who have been baptized resume their own garments. The custom of dressing them in white robes dates only from the close of the third century.‡ The bishop once more lays his hands upon them and prays in these words: "Lord God, as Thou hast made these worthy to receive pardon of their sins in the coming world, so render them worthy to be filled with Thy Holy Spirit, and pour upon them Thy grace, that they may serve Thee according to thy good pleasure; for to Thee, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the glory in the holy Church now and for ever, world without end."§ After all these ceremonies the neophytes are brought into the assembly of Christians, and the bishop or elder repeats before the Church the anointing

* "Const. Egypt." ii. 46.

† Τῶν βαπτισθέντων προσευχομένων. Ibid. ii. 46. This prayer of the neophyte is specified. "Const. Apost." iii. 18. He pronounces the Lord's Prayer, as having become a son of the house, ὡς υἱὸς πατρί.

‡ Cyril, "Hier. Cathec. Mystic." iv. 558; Euseb. "Vita Constantini," iv. 62.

§ "Const. Egypt." ii. 46.

with the oil of thanksgiving. "I anoint thy forehead," he says to each new Christian, "with this holy oil in the name of God the Father Almighty, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit." The sign of the cross is made upon the brow of all the baptized. The bishop salutes them, saying, "The Lord be with thee;" and they reply, "And with thy spirit."

During this sacred ceremony all the people are in prayer with the catechumens,* and the ceremonial ends with the kiss of peace, which the men give to the men, and the women to the women.

The eucharistic meal is immediately celebrated according to the ordinary rites, with this single difference, that to those who are partaking for the first time, honey and milk are offered, reminding them, according to a familiar image, that they have entered the spiritual Canaan, the true land of promise, flowing with milk and honey.† It appears that it was the practice in some Churches to make the neophyte, before baptism, sign a written engagement, as if enrolling himself in a sacred corps.‡ The changing of the name in baptism belongs to a later period.§ It is clear that confirmation was closely associated with baptism; it was not a separate ceremony; the one was the consummation of the other, and gave to it its spiritual significance. It was the emphatic proclamation of the admission of the neophyte into the company of believers, to the possession of their rights and the exercise of their duties.

* Παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ ἅμα προσευχομένου. "Const. Egypt." ii. 46.

† "Const. Egypt." ii. 46. "Mellis et lactis societatem." Tertull. "Adv. Marc." i. 14. Comp. Clement of Alex. "Pædag." i. 6. The Land of Canaan is described by this expression. Exod. iii. 8; xxxiii. 3.

‡ See Augustine, "Archæology," ii. 426. § Ibid. ii. 474.

It is easy to perceive how great an influence must have been exercised by this baptismal ceremony both upon the subjects and the witnesses of it. The solemn vigil, the Church kneeling in prayer around the catechumens, the simple, grand ritual, full of poetry and solemnity, and so peculiarly adapted to the imaginative mind of Egypt — the native soil of symbolism — the sacred vows, which might so soon be sealed with blood—all these would combine to make the memories of such a day deep and ineffaceable. There was no analogy to the idle phantasmagoria of initiative rites practised at the mysteries of Eleusis, of Isis, or of Mithra. Here the true spiritual significance shone through the symbol, instead of being lost in it. The sign did not conceal, still less did it take the place of, the thing signified. The custom of offering to the neophyte milk and honey, to remind him that he had entered the Lord's land, gives of itself the clearest evidence that the material act was regarded only as a simple expression of the Christian idea. It was just a metaphor put into action. It is no detriment to the sign to keep it in closest connection with the spiritual realities it expresses, and to which it lends new force by expression; and we do no dishonour to baptism in pointing out how widely it differed from the lustrations of paganism.

While it is established beyond question that baptism was intended primarily for adults, and that the rules for its observance have this fact mainly in view, it is no less certain that the practice of administering it to infants rapidly grew in the early Church. Decisive proofs of this are found only at the commencement

of the third century. "The Constitutions of the Egyptian Church" show us that infants were the first dipped in the baptismal font. The word employed, however, does not describe infants newly born, but designates generally the period of childhood, embracing many years. The document runs thus: "Let any one of them who can speak, speak when required in the service. If he cannot speak, let the parents answer for him.* The baptism of infants is thus still brought under the general rule that there must be a profession of faith; it is only one particular instance of a general practice; there is even to be conformity to that which is the characteristic feature of the rite—the expression of personal adherence to the gospel. Yet the slope was a slippery one. Origen already connected the baptism of infants with his favourite theory of a fall antecedent to our earthly existence.† Tertullian complained bitterly of the abuse which had so soon followed on this practice. "It is well," he said, "to delay the baptism, especially of young children. Let them come to adult age; let them come when they can understand and know what they are about to do; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Jesus Christ. Why press upon this innocent age the forgiveness of sins? People act more prudently in the things of this life. Why should the heavenly

* Πρῶτα τὰ παιδία βαπτιζέσθωσαν· ὁ δυνάμενος λέγειν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ λεγέτω, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ μὴ δυναμένου οἱ γονεῖς λεγέτωσαν ἢ ἄλλος τις τῷ γένει προσήκων. "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 46.

† "Addi his etiam potest ut requiratur quid causæ sit cum baptisma ecclesiæ pro remissione peccatorum detur, secundum ecclesiæ observantiam etiam parvulis dari baptismum; cum utique si nihil esset in parvulis quod ad remissionem deberet, gratia baptismi superflua videretur." Origen, "In Levit. Homil." viii. 3. Comp. Cyprian, "Epist." 64, 65.

treasures be committed to those who are not considered competent to hold earthly goods?"*

Tertullian, being a rigorous Montanist, cannot, of course, be taken as the exact representative of the Church of his day, although he was one of the mightiest masters of Christian thought; but the language used by him shows us that the institution of baptism was already undergoing a process of transformation, and that the time was not distant when this sacrament would be regarded as the great mode of admission into the Church. The institution of godfathers and godmothers was of later growth. At first the parents were simply charged, as we have seen, to reply instead of the children.† When a slave presented himself as a catechumen, his masters, if they were Christian, were asked to bear testimony to his good conduct. The appointment of godfathers grew subsequently out of this practice.‡

We pass by the grave question of the baptism of heretics, because it is largely involved with the great struggles which took place in the Church of the third century on the subject of ecclesiastical constitution, and of these we shall speak presently. Martyrdom was universally regarded as the highest of all training for the catechumens: it might even take the place of baptism.§ The ordinance of baptism was administered hastily, and without the ordinary forms of preparation, in cases of sickness. Only if the sick man recovered, the rite thus celebrated was considered inadequate, and

* Tertullian, "De baptismo," c. 18.

† The sponsors of whom Tertullian speaks, simply acted the part thus described. "De baptismo," c. 18. ‡ "Const. Apost." viii. 47.

§ "Hic est baptismus qui lavacrum et non acceptum repræsentat et perditum reddit." Tertullian, "De baptismo," c. 18; Cyprian, 73, 21, 22.

not valid for a Christian who should hold office in the Church.* Cyprian even sanctioned the baptism of persons deranged, whom he regarded as being possessed.†

Baptism was administered only to persons; the baptism of things without life—such as the baptism of bells, subsequently practised—was unknown to Christian antiquity. The Church held as yet in too vivid remembrance the sublime words, "God is a Spirit: He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."‡

Baptism by total immersion was the rule, but sprinkling was substituted for it in cases of sickness, when the usual form might have been attended with danger. Cyprian, speaking of those who in bodily infirmity desire to receive the Divine grace, says that baptism by sprinkling, when it is administered in the bosom of the Church, and the faith of the officiator is pure, is of the Lord's faithfulness made sufficient.§ The Western Church alone adopted as a general rule the practice of sprinkling. This form no doubt became common with the baptism of infants, for all the special provisions in case of bodily weakness would apply to them. We see from the sculptures on many sarcophagi that the practice of sprinkling was frequent at the close of the third century, although the older mode as yet prevailed.

* Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 43. † Cyprian, "Epist." 69, 15.

‡ Augustine, "Archæology," ii. 347. The Marcionites had invented a rite of substitutive baptism for the dead. This Tertullian repudiates with much force. "De resurrect. carnis." c. 48.

§ "Adspersionem aquæ instar salutaris lavacri obtinere." Cyprian, "Epist." 69, 12.

CHAPTER II.

ORGANISATION OF LOCAL CHURCHES AT THE CLOSE OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

We have seen how the Church of the second century received her members, and what solemn pledges she required of proselytes. She thus formed a true spiritual community, into which mere conformity to certain forms of religion received by family tradition gave no passport; which required from all its members personal adherence to the truth, and a voluntary submission to rigid discipline and scrutiny. A Church thus constituted was of necessity a self-governing Church. The Christian republic stands firm so long as Christianity is truly the cause of all believers, the *res publica* of the Church. During this period, therefore, the primitive constitution was maintained in all its essential features. The ecclesiastical office preserves its representative character, and is not transformed into a priesthood. We shall find, however, that the office of the bishop has a tendency to distinguish itself from that of the elder, and to take precedence of it by a sort of spontaneous evolution, for which we shall discover various causes. This change is the forerunner of others of graver moment, which, after long and severe struggles, will gain ground in the succeeding period.

§ 1.—*Modifications in the Idea of the Ecclesiastical Office during the course of the Second Century.*

Before describing the organisation for Church government at the commencement of the third century, it will be needful for us to examine carefully the various and combined influences which, at the close of the second century, led to a preponderance of the episcopate altogether unknown to an earlier era.

Let us first pass in rapid review the primitive organisation of the Church, as we have already described it in the previous volumes of this work.

At the commencement, all power is concentrated in the apostolic office, not by any priestly claim, but because the apostles are the ideal representatives of the Church. The number of the apostles suggests that they are not the heirs of the priestly tribe, but are rather as the twelve patriarchs of Israel. They are the nucleus formed by Jesus Christ Himself of the new people of God, the first witnesses of the Master; and on this very account the position they hold is one that cannot be handed down by succession, for it is absurd to suppose that there can be successive generations of first witnesses. They do not govern the Church as if they were invested with any despotic authority. When their number has to be supplemented because of the traitor's death, they call together the whole Church and ask its decision.* It is after a free conference, in which all the Christians of Jerusalem take part, that they decide the grave and delicate question of the relations of the Churches gathered out

* Acts i. 23.

of paganism with those of Jewish origin.* The various ecclesiastical offices are created not by direct Divine institution, after the manner of the Mosaic priesthood, but according to the needs of the Church, with its own ratification and free choice. They spread out from the apostolate like the branches of a mighty tree, nourished with the same sap, and developing in the same atmosphere of freedom. Like the apostolate, all these offices have a representative character without any admixture of priestism. Thus the first diaconate of the seven Hellenist Christians is not formed by any solemn institution, but arises out of a special necessity, and is designed to avoid the irritation caused by a certain inequality in the distribution of the gifts of the Church among disciples of different nationalities. The new office is decided upon by the Church, and she herself chooses those who are to be invested with it.† The same may be said of the office of elder or bishop, for the two designations are entirely synonymous, as we have already abundantly shown.‡ This office also is based on popular election,§ just as is the diaconate properly so called, which is charged with the care of the poor and of public worship more specially than had been the case with the seven deacons set apart at Jerusalem in the first days of the Church. These offices are borrowed, not from the temple worship, but from the synagogue, which had nothing priestly about it, and the very simple organisation of which singularly adapted it to the needs of the new religious community. Let it not be forgotten that so long as

* Acts, xv. 6–22. † Ibid. vi. 2–5. ‡ Ibid. xx. 17–28; Titus i. 5.
§ Χειροτονήσαντες πρεσβυτέρους κατ' ἐκκλησίαν. Acts xiv. 23.

the temple stood, Jewish Christians still observed the Mosaic law, and consequently still accepted the Jewish priesthood. It is evident, therefore, that there could be no priestly character attached by them to the new offices they created. The extraordinary abundance of miraculous gifts in the apostolic age tends also to diminish the importance of the ecclesiastical office, and to efface the sharp line of demarcation between the Christian people and their elders or bishops. Inspiration in those early days is like a torrent, which, on first bursting from its mountain prison, knows no bounds, and which will only presently, as it forces its way down into the plain, find there broad banks within which it will flow in regular channels. The Divine Spirit which breaks through the ordinary forms of human speech into that language of ecstasy known as the gift of tongues, will not confine itself to any organisation. It blows where it will, and prophets arise from every rank. The gift of teaching is not a necessary and exclusive privilege of the elders; we must even infer that some of these were without it, since St. Paul carefully distinguishes those who possess it.* Every Christian has the right to be heard in the assemblies for worship.† In short, there is no semblance of sacerdotal or hierarchical organisation in the ecclesiastical offices of the apostolic age. Corresponding to the growing requirements of the Church, and arising out of them, these offices have simply a representative character, and all form a ministry of service, not a ruling priesthood. It is natural that they should assume a greater importance in the suc-

* 1 Tim. v. 17; Eph. iv. 11. † 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

ceeding period, when the last of the apostles was gone, and when supernatural gifts became less common, or rather ceased to be manifested in the same miraculous outward forms, while they permeated more and more deeply the whole nature.

The destruction of the temple and of the Holy City, which was equivalent to the overthrow of all the institutions of Judaism, compelled that portion of the Church which had remained in some measure faithful to those institutions, while conforming to the decision of the Council of Jerusalem, to seek henceforth their sole support within the Church itself. The priesthood had ceased; the ecclesiastical office must now alone suffice for all those religious needs which had sought satisfaction in the old institutions. While we cannot hold, with one illustrious theologian, that after the destruction of the temple a second council was convened at Jerusalem, in which the organisation of the Church received from the Apostles more fixed and almost episcopal forms,* it must be admitted that its offices acquired from this time a new importance. This appears even from allusions in the writings of St. John to the state of the Churches towards the close of the first century. We have given careful study to the period which extends from this date to the appearance of the great teachers of the second century. In this sort of interregnum, while there were no powerful religious leaders, many fatal seeds were sown in the soil, which were not at once developed. The harvest of errors appears in the following period, and when the

* See my refutation of Rothe's hypothesis, founded on a passage of Clement of Rome. "Early Years of Christianity," vol. i. "The Apostolic Age," pp. 367–369.

defenders and representatives of the ancient liberty of the Church raise their voices in protest, it is too late; the religious atmosphere has been insensibly changed, and priestly and hierarchical ideas are only in abeyance, waiting to receive definitive forms. The influences which led to this fatal change are of various kinds, some of them even associated with the purest glories of the martyr Church. We have already enumerated them; but as we find them assuming new forms in the progress of the second century, it may be well to recapitulate them, noting, as we do so, their rapid development and modification.

We have assigned four main causes for the deviations we have observed from the primitive ecclesiastical organisation. 1st. The great and rapid growth of the Church, which necessarily brought into it heterogeneous elements. 2nd. Persecution, which added to the authority of the bishops, just as in time of war the ascendency of military leaders is increased. 3rd. Heresy, which sometimes, by the terror it inspired, gathered the people in more united and compact bodies around their pastors, sometimes had another and indirect effect in leading them back to Jewish notions of ecclesiastical authority. 4th. A progressive deviation from the purity of the faith, and the substitution of a certain legalism for the great doctrine of Paul on justification, which is the parent of all true liberty, and the basis of religious equality. All these causes go on accumulating in force during the second century. Christian missions do not cease to spread their net over all parts of the empire; the propagandism of the new Church assumes unparalleled proportions, and

proselytes are gathered by thousands, especially in the great centres of civilisation. Even in those times, when the profession of the new faith might cost so dear, the mere excitement of novelty was not without its effect, as well as more serious and thoughtful conviction. Men were groaning under a great *ennui*, and were ready to grasp at that which was new in any form. It often happened that Christianity was embraced from the same motives which led crowds of initiates into the sanctuaries of the East.

When persecution, after a moment's slumber, reawoke, the number of sudden defections showed how the tares had been mixed with the wheat: the sanguinary sifting soon divided the true from the false. But even yet, in calmer times, and in spite of all the precautions taken by the Church to guard her doors against the intrusion of an unconverted crowd, there were found among her members many who, prompted in their profession by emotions really sincere, yet failed to bring with them that enlightened and approved faith which opposes the most serious obstacle to ecclesiastical assumption.

Persecution, in its turn, operates in the same direction. The community of Christians scattered abroad by the sword, naturally seeks a rallying point, a centre of unity in its spiritual heads: it gathers around these under an instinct of danger. Now we know how constant was the course of persecution through the whole of the second century. More terrible still, perhaps, in the succeeding age, it raged then at longer intervals, which allowed the Christians a breathing space. The Church of Justin Martyr and of Irenæus

never knows a sense of security. It is constantly exposed to fearful crises, such as that which in the history of ancient Rome gave birth to the dictatorship. Again, persecution lends an entirely new importance to ecclesiastical discipline. The question of the restoration of apostates has to be settled; the tribunal of penitence will soon become confounded with the episcopal chair. This momentous transformation is not completed until the following period, but it is already in process of preparation.

The second century is the epoch of great heresies. We have endeavoured to explain the strange fascination exercised over this generation, so eager for the symbolical and the marvellous, by the subtle metaphysics and morbid poetry of Gnosticism, which had the great advantage of investing with new life under Christian forms, and enveloping in a veil of Biblical allegories, the old naturalism on which Paganism had reared its various systems. Gnosticism, by virtue of its innumerable modifications, was adapted to all grades of culture. It could present itself as a sublime doctrine to the adepts of science, and as an attractive fable to the feminine mind, while it commended itself supremely to the pride of the human heart by requiring no renunciation of self or of good works, holding out salvation as the reward of fasting and asceticism. In this way Valentinian, Basilides, and Marcion unquestionably placed the Church in great peril, and by that very fact brought it more completely under the shepherd's crook.

Heresy did not always occupy the cloudy heights of Gnosticism. It showed itself more accessible in its Judaising form, into which sometimes there still entered

much of oriental and dualist speculation, for the most hybrid combinations were possible in this age of universal syncretism. The Judæo-Christianity of the second century differs widely from that of the first, which was only a rude attempt to attach the Church to the synagogue, and to keep it under the yoke of the law and of the Levitical ritual. Now it is at once more subtle and less clear, permeated with the theosophic elements abroad in the air: it is moreover essentially hierarchical, and seeks to re-establish, if not the priesthood, at least that ecclesiastical authority which spoke in such lofty tones from Moses' seat in the time of Christ. We have a striking proof of this influence of Judaising heresy upon the formation of the monarchical episcopate, in the curious philosophical romance of the "Clementines," which belongs to the year 180.*

We need not enter here into its peculiar teachings, on which we have already dwelt at length. We shall confine ourselves now to that which relates to the organisation of the Church. The conclusion of the third homily is very remarkable in this respect. The Apostle Peter is on the point of quitting the town of Cæsarea, to continue his missionary travels. The Church which he leaves behind must not be without a spiritual director. This spiritual director, whom he describes as a bishop, is to take his place in all things, to be his successor, at least at Cæsarea. "Since," he says, "it is necessary that we appoint a man to take my place, let us ask of God to show us who is the most excellent among us, fit to sit in the seat of Christ, and

* "Early Years of Christianity," vol. iii. "Heresy and Christian Doctrine," pp. 85–88.

to govern His Church." * We then see that according to the "Clementines" the bishop is the successor of the apostles, the vicar of Christ. In another passage, not less remarkable, the bishop is clearly distinguished from the elder, who is to be quite subordinate to him, as the representative of Jesus Christ. The Church is to remain united to him as to her Divine Master. "Let the bishop be listened to first of all, as the head. Let the elders see that the orders are obeyed, and let the deacons watch over the outward and moral life of the brethren, to give an account of it to the bishop." † His mission is to command, that of the other Christians to obey, for he is the vicar of Christ.‡ The Church must constitute a true monarchy in order to be well ruled. It is by the monarchy that God has given peace to the world. We shall find the same principle producing everywhere the same result.§ It is the apostle himself who lays his hands upon Zaccheus, the new bishop, and pronounces these solemn words: "O God, our Father, keep the flock, with the shepherd. Thou art omnipotent, O King of kings, Lord of lords! Give to the bishop to loose that which should be loosed, and to bind that which should be bound. Teach Thou by him, and by his means keep Thou the Church of Christ as Thy pure bride." ‖

This extravagant clericalism is still more marked in the "Recognitiones," which are, as we know, a new form of the "Clementines" presented ten years later.

* Ἐπεὶ οὖν ἐπί τινα ὡρίσαι ἀντ' ἐμοῦ τὸν ἐμὸν ἀναπληροῦντα τόπον. . . ἵνα ἐπὶ τῆς Χριστοῦ καθέδρας καθεσθεὶς τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐκκλησίαν εὐσεβῶς οἰκονομῇ. Clement, "Homil." iii. 60.

† Πρὸ πάντων ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ὡς ἄρχων. Ibid. iii. 67.

‡ Ὁ προκαθεζόμενος Χριστοῦ τόπον πεπίστευται. Ibid. iii. 66.

§ Ibid. iii. 62. ‖ Ibid. iii. 72.

In these we find no mention of the election of the bishop by the Christian people. Judaising heresy is unquestionably in advance of the general level of the orthodox Church in this conception of ecclesiastical authority. It gives here a precise and definite form to that which was as yet only an aspiration in the Church of the second century, if we except one or two of the Fathers. The episcopal system is developed in the "Clementines" to a degree which it will not reach in the orthodox Church for another century. It is true, nevertheless, that heresy has only anticipated on this point, as on many others, and that its influence contributed largely to help on and hasten the establishment of the monarchical episcopate.

Judaising heresy would not have had so much influence on the Christendom of the second century if the Church had not been in some respects far too much in unison with it in its conception of evangelical doctrine. Religious faith is the secret spring of ecclesiastical organisation, and the deviations of the form do but reproduce those of the spirit.

We have already shown that the universal priesthood was only maintained to its full extent in practice, as well as in theory, so long as the redemptive sacrifice of Christ was accepted without reserve as the source of universal salvation. He is the one Priest of the Church only if He truly finished all upon the cross, so that His disciples have but to appropriate His sacrifice by faith, in order to become priests and kings in Him and by Him. If all was not completed on Calvary, if the salvation of man is not a perfected work, then we are still separated from God; we have

no free access into His sanctuary, and we seek mediators or priests who may present our offering for us. When Christianity is regarded rather as a new law than as the sovereign manifestation of Divine grace, it leaves us in our impotence, our unworthiness, to our fruitless strivings and our partial aspirations. We are no more kings and priests, we fall back under the yoke of a servile fear. The hierarchy gains by all that men lose of childlike confidence in that infinite mercy which alone renders needless all official mediation between the penitent and God. If so early as the close of the apostolic age the grand theology of St: Paul had undergone such changes as we have seen, our summary of the doctrine of the Fathers of the second century shows to what an extent a legalising spirit had gained ground among them, since even in the noble school of Alexandria the idea of redemption was considerably modified. In the period anterior to this Justin Martyr had repeated the formulæ of the Apostle of the Gentiles without apprehending their meaning, and he had thus been led to ignore the marked distinction between the two covenants. Only we must remember that the logic of ideas, like the ancient Nemesis, is slow of foot, and only arrives at practical consequences long after laying down the principles in which they were contained. Thus it is plain, from the admirable passages we have quoted from Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenæus, that the great principle of the universal priesthood, considered in itself, was held by them unchanged and without any concession to sacerdotal views properly so called. It is not upon the heights, but in the valleys, that the

mists gather which obscure the sky. While the great spirits remained faithful to the liberties of the Church, ordinary minds were brought more and more under the dominion of adverse influences.

We must admit, moreover, that the hierarchical party had the good fortune to be represented by one of the most illustrious bishops of the second century—Irenæus of Lyons. Even before his day, Ignatius of Antioch had advanced in the same direction with all the ardour of his soul, and with a fervour caught, as it were, in anticipation from the martyr-fire in which he was to suffer. However much allowance we make for apocryphal additions to the writings of Ignatius, it is incontrovertible that he extravagantly exalted the episcopal office. There is as yet, however, no fundamental change. Polycarp, who survived Ignatius many years, still maintains the identity of the functions of elder and bishop. The bishop of Antioch concerns himself very little with ecclesiastical claims. What he passionately desires is unity, and the discipline of a compact body in a day of fierce conflict. He gives his brethren in the faith a military commission, rather than a judicial title, to the exercise of authority in the Church. Irenæus is a far loftier spirit, yet he yields to the same influences, and goes before his age in his theory of ecclesiastical authority. We must bear in mind that he lived at a time when the Church was exposed to the most imminent perils on every hand, when persecution raged without, and schism was rife within. It is in his great work against heresy that Irenæus gives expression to his episcopal theories. It is with a view to crush the hundred-headed hydra that he would

strengthen ecclesiastical authority, establish it upon an immovable basis, attach the episcopate to the apostolate, and endow it with a special grace of infallibility—the *unction* of truth.* Here again, under the pressure of critical circumstances, Irenæus departs from the general views of the age. He himself elsewhere recognises the identity of the episcopate and the presbytery. He speaks in the third book of his treatise, "Contra Hæres.," of the tradition of the apostles handed down by the elders. These elders are in the next chapter called bishops.† A few years earlier the unknown author of "Pastor Hermas" had maintained this identity of the two offices in full assembly of the Church of Rome, denouncing, at the same time, not without bitterness, the assumptions of ecclesiastical authority. "The Church, exhausted and sickly," he said, "seeks rest for herself on the episcopal seat."‡ This lively and apt image represents perfectly the transition through which the organisation of the Church was passing. The bishops are not as yet formally distinguished from the elders; the identity of the two offices is freely recognised. St. Jerome, three centuries later, most clearly adopts this view. He says: "The apostle teaches us that the bishops were not distinct from the elders. If, in process of time, one was chosen to hold authority over the others, this was done to guard against schism."§

The commencement of the third century is the period

* Irenæus, "Contra Hæres." iii. 3; iv. 43. † Ibid. iii. 2, 3.

‡ "Pastor," Visio iii. 11.

§ "Apostolus perspicue docet eosdem esse presbyteros quam episcopus. Quod autem postea unus electus est qui cæteris præponeretur in schismatis remedium factum est." Hyeron. "Comment. in Tit." i. 5.

when the Church, whether through exhaustion or through the fear of divisions, distinctly departed from its primitive organisation, not in principle, but in practice. It was at this time it set apart one of the elders, who, under the title of bishop, should be the director and head of the Church. This innovation met at once with much opposition. What then will be the result when, in the following period, the hierarchical principle finds free and full development? This is a question we have now to answer as we trace the organisation of clerical authority in the various Churches between the years 200 and 230.

§ 2.—*Organisation of Local Churches at the commencement of the Third Century.**

The formation of a clerical body, properly so called, separated from other Christian people by peculiar religious privileges, is a matter independent of the constitution of ecclesiastical authority. Those who exercise that authority may acquire considerable importance without becoming a caste. A democracy may appoint from its own body leaders who shall represent, while they govern it, and may assign to them an amount of authority, without constituting an oligarchy all the dignities of which should belong to one favoured class. The Church had for a long time been strengthening the governing body, but it had not yet called in question the universal priesthood, at least not in principle. We have seen that the neophyte, on coming up out of the

* Beside the works already quoted, see Ritschl's noble book, "Entstehung der altcatholischen Kirche." 2nd edit. Bonn, 1857. Zweit. Buch, erster Abschnitt. ii. and iii.

waters of baptism, performed a priestly act in repeating the Lord's Prayer; and once admitted to the sacrament, he entered upon all the privileges of the Church. The great line of demarcation between Christians holding office and simple members of the Church, was not yet drawn; the dividing line was between those who belonged to the Christian community and those who were still kept on the threshold—the baptized and the mere catechumens. We have seen how rigidly this distinction was observed. The catechumens were not permitted to share in the celebration of the Eucharist. They were bound to retire when the sacramental word had been spoken: "Holy things for the holy!" Great were the privileges of the faithful; they were truly the initiated, taking part in the holy mysteries. It was not possible to regard them as common, or to suppose the existence, apart from them, of a sacred tribe constituting the heritage of the Lord—in other words, a body of clergy. The Christian people were all priests, as the Apostle Peter had himself called them,* and they would remain so until the Church opened its gates to a multitude with no other passport than birth and a magical sacrament. The faithful are called "the clergy of the Christians" in an apocryphal fragment of the letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians, which dates from the beginning of the second century.† Irenæus acknowledges that all the righteous belong to the priestly order.‡ The word clergy is applied for the first time to those bearing office in the Church by

* 1 Peter v. 3.

† Ἐν κλήρῳ Ἐφεσίων τῶν χριστιανῶν. Ignatius, "Ad Eph." 11.

‡ "Omnes justi sacerdotalem habent ordinem." Irenæus, "Contra Hæres." iv. 20.

Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian.* In their time the word clergy signified simply a particular class of men. Thus the Christians of Lyons, in their letter to their brethren in Asia Minor, speak of the clergy of the martyrs.† Eusebius employs the word as denoting an order of succession, without connecting with it in any degree the priestly character.‡ St. Augustine and St. Jerome, contenting themselves with the Latin translation, make the word a derivative of *sors*, in memory of the first election made in the Church by lot to fill up the place of Judas among the apostles. § Their interpretation, entirely erroneous as it was, absolutely excluded the notion of priesthood. Subsequently, when a new priestly order arose, the clergy were regarded as the special heritage of God, or as possessing Him as their peculiar inheritance, according to the text in Deuteronomy referring to the tribe of Levi.‖

It is not surprising that the ecclesiastics of the fourth century should have assigned to themselves this signal honour, when we find them at the same period appropriating with emphasis the generic name which belongs to all believers, and calling themselves by pre-eminence the Christians.¶ Tertullian, the great and ardent champion of the liberties of the Church, was also, singularly enough, the one to introduce into religious language the word *order*, as applied to those holding

* Clement of Alex. "Quis dives," 42. "Unde episcopi et clerus." Tertullian, "De Monog." 12.

† Κλῆρος τῶν μαρτύρων. Eusebius, "H. E." v. 1, § 7. So Routh, "Reliquiæ," i. 305.

‡ Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 2.

§ "Clerici vocantur quia de sorte sunt domini." St. Jerome, "Ep." 52; "Ad. Nepot.;" Augustin, "In Psa. cvii."

‖ Deut. x. 9; St. Jerome, "Ep." 52, "Ad Nepot.," and St. Augustine give this second interpretation of the word κλῆρος.

¶ "Cod. Theod." v. 2–2; Giesler, "K. G." i. 228.

ecclesiastical offices. He used the word as a jurist; and in speaking of an order in the Church, as in the State, he meant simply to designate the constituted authority, without defining its constitution or origin.* He calls the simple members of the Church the laity, but only to distinguish them from Christians invested with office, not to mark them as an inferior class.† No one has vindicated more forcibly than Tertullian the universal priesthood with all its rights. He is anxious, no doubt, to preserve the Church from anarchy; he reproaches the heretics with troubling it and making its offices the sport of their caprice, unmaking one day the bishop they had appointed the day before, and changing from hour to hour the deacon into a reader, and the elder into a layman, and assigning to the latter priestly functions.‡ This last expression must be taken in connection with the passages in which Tertullian proclaims the universal priesthood in such terms as these. "Is not that which is prescribed for the bishop, prescribed to all the faithful on the same authority? Whence come the bishop and the clergy? Are they not taken from the universal body of the faithful? § We should fall into grave error did we imagine that what is forbidden to the priests is permitted to the laity. Are not we laymen also priests? ||

* "Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesiæ auctoritas." Tertullian, "Exhort. Castit." c. 7. Roman law spoke not only of the order of the senate, but also of the order of decurions in each town. Tertullian used the word *order* also in the sense of organisation: *ecclesiæ ordo.* "De Monog." 11. The sacred writings apply it to the priesthood of Melchisedec, who was the type of the priesthood of Christ, as distinguished from the sacerdotal caste. Psa. cx. 4; Heb. v. 6. † Tertullian, "Exhort. Castit." 7.

‡ "Hodie presbyter qui cras laicus." "De Prescript." 41.

§ "Unde enim episcopi et clerus? Non de omnibus?" "De Monog." 12.

|| "Nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus?" Tertullian, "Exhort. Castit." c. 7.

It is written that Jesus Christ has made us kings and priests unto God His Father. It is ecclesiastical authority alone which has established the distinction between the priestly order and the Christian people. Wherever that order is not as yet instituted, thou dost celebrate the holy communion and baptism; thou alone art thine own priest. Wherever two or three are assembled, though they be but laymen, there is a Church, for each one lives by his faith, and there is no respect of persons with God. If then thou hast in thyself the privileges of a priest, thou art bound to obey the same rules, unless thou wouldest alienate thy priestly right." *

Into whatever extravagances of rigour Tertullian may have fallen in the very treatises from which we have borrowed these beautiful words, he was nevertheless the faithful representative of his age in treating the ecclesiastical office as simply instituted for purposes of order and government, and in regarding the priesthood as the essential characteristic of the Christian as a Christian. This was in his view pre-eminently the Divine right. The great theologians of Alexandria and the fiery Carthaginian use the same language.†

The names applied indifferently to the Christians in the religious speech of the day, all imply the same high dignity. Believers are called the faithful, the illuminated, the initiate, the perfect.‡

The introduction to Book viii. of the "Apostolical Constitutions," which dates from the commencement of the third century, expresses very beautifully and broadly

* Tertullian, "Exhort. Castit." c. 7.
† See vol. iii. of my History, pp. 283; 4.
‡ Augustine, "Archæology," i. 147–150.

the conception, far more personal than official, which Christian antiquity entertained of the ecclesiastical office. The unknown author of this remarkable fragment is perhaps St. Hippolytus, for in treating of the miraculous gifts bestowed on primitive Christianity, he refers to a work ascribed to that Father.* These gifts, splendid as they were, were less precious in God's sight than humble and devoted piety. That which is true of miraculous gifts is still more emphatically true of ecclesiastical offices, which are in the same manner external to the man and imparted from without, while piety derives its inestimable value from its personal character. Is not faith, indeed, also a supernatural gift, and the most precious of all? "There is no man who has believed in God by Jesus Christ, and has not received a gift from the Holy Spirit. Where shall we find a supernatural gift, if not in the act of faith by which a man passes from pagan impiety to belief in God by Christ?" † Herein pre-eminently is miraculous power manifest. Nor is this all: piety depends in part on our own volition, and personally concerns ourselves, while prodigies proceed from a miraculous power which is without us. So is it also with offices in the Church. That we be Christians depends on ourselves, but that we hold the office of apostle or bishop or any other, is not of ourselves, but of God, who bestows the needful gift. ‡ The essential for the bishop himself is that he possess the moral qualities which

* The list of works ascribed to St. Hippolytus which we find inscribed on a statue in the Vatican Museum, comprises one book on *Charisms*. Bunsen's "Hippolytus," vol. i. note 1, p. 434. † "Const. Apost." viii. 1.

‡ Τὸ μὲν εἶναι χριστιανὸν ἐφ' ἡμῖν, τὸ δὲ ἀπόστολον ἢ ἐπίσκοπον ἢ ἄλλο τι οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ τῷ διδόντι θεῷ τὰ χαρίσματα. Ibid. viii. 1.

are the basis of piety. Just as an impious king is no more a king, but a tyrant, so a bishop who ignores or belies the truth is no bishop, though he may wrongfully bear the name.* Kings and bishops are nothing in themselves, apart from their subordinates.

It is the union of the one with the other which constitutes society, whether civil or religious. Undoubtedly it is necessary for good order that each fulfil his proper function and do not pass its limits, but the spiritual reality is the one essential, and without it the bishop has no more *raison d'être* than the Christian layman. Such were the principles of evangelical liberalism which were still paramount even in the age when the episcopal office asserted a decided supremacy over that of the elder. We could not convey a better idea of this noble liberalism, so soon to vanish away, than in the words of singular boldness which in the "Coptic Constitution" of the Church of Egypt are attributed to the apostles: "If we have omitted any point in your instructions, practice will reveal it to you, for we all have the Spirit of God." † Thus the apostles themselves claim no exclusive Divine illumination; such illumination is the privilege of all Christians. What ecclesiastical office shall then presume to assert that it alone possesses "the unction of the Holy One, which teacheth all things," ‡ and shall declare itself the only medium of communication with eternal truth?

Upon this very broad basis the organisation of the

* Οὔτε ἐπίσκοπος ἀγνοίᾳ ἢ κακονοίᾳ πεπιεσμένος ἐπίσκοπός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ ψευδώνυμος. "Const. Apost." viii. 2.

† Εἰ δέ τι παρήκαμεν, τὰ πράγματα δηλώσει ὑμῖν, ἔχομεν γὰρ πάντες τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ. "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 41. Comp. Ibid. 62.

‡ 1 John ii. 27.

Church was reared. Its distinctive feature is the permanent separation effected between the office of elder and that of bishop, and the subordination of the former to the latter. The relation of the chief officer is very exactly defined in these words of St. Hilary, which apply more truly to this period than to the age in which he lived: "Every bishop is an elder, but every elder is not a bishop. *He* is a bishop who is first among the elders."* At Alexandria, up to the middle of the third century, the elders chose the one of their number who was to preside over them, and accorded to him episcopal authority. The bishops are often called the presidents of the Church. "The approved elders preside over your assemblies," says Tertullian.† This appellation of president helps us to apprehend the natural transition from the primitive equality of the two offices to the predominance of the episcopate. But nothing could bear less resemblance to the position of a bishop in modern conception, than the place thus accorded him when he had ascended the first step of the hierarchical ladder. His importance was not derived from his dignity, but from the extent of the sphere which he occupied. At Rome, at Lyons, at Alexandria, the bishop had more extensive authority because he had a larger flock, but the nature of the authority was the very same when exercised within the narrowest limits. Sometimes a bishopric comprised only a hamlet. We read in the "Coptic Constitution:" "Is there a spot where the little company of believers competent to elect a bishop does not amount to twelve,

* "Hic episcopus est, qui inter presbyteros primus est." Hilary, "Ep. I ad Tim." iii.

† "Præsident probati quique seniores." Tertullian, "Apol." 39.

let them write to the neighbouring Churches, if these are populous, and let three delegates be sent to ascertain with care who is worthy to undertake this office." * It follows that the pastor of a Church which might be contained in the humblest of upper rooms is called a bishop, no less than the spiritual head of a flock numbering thousands of members. It is well, doubtless, that he should be a man versed in the sacred Scriptures and capable of interpreting them, but the absence of culture is no obstacle to his elevation. "Let him be in that case full of gentleness, and surpassing all the rest in love, so that he inspires respect." † A great heart is of more account than great learning.

The office of bishop is not yet defined with the precision which it will presently receive as the hierarchical system is developed. His first duty is to preside in Divine service. So early as the time of Justin Martyr, worship, while it still preserved its simplicity, was not left to the caprice of individual inspiration. The presiding elder blessed the bread and wine of the Eucharist. ‡ In the following period it is the bishop alone who consecrates the elements. It is he who confirms the catechumens, and lays his hands on the heads of the bishops, elders, and deacons, when they enter on their office. He also directs the discipline of the Church, and as this function becomes of more importance, the weight of his authority will be proportionately increased.

* Ἐὰν ὀλιγανδρία ὑπάρχει καὶ μήπου πλῆθος τυγχάνει τῶν δυναμένων ψηφίσασθαι περὶ ἐπισκόπου ἐντὸς δεκαδύο ἀνδρῶν. "Const. Copt." i. 13.

† Πραΰς καὶπῦ ἀγάπῃ εἰς πάντας περισσευέτω. Ibid. i. 13

‡ Προσφερέται τῷ προεστῶτι τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἄρτος καὶ ποτήριον. Justin Martyr, "Apol." ii. 97; "Opera," 97.

Religious instruction is one of his principal duties, but he shares the preaching with the elders, and is even assisted in this office by laymen, as is proved by the example of Origen.* The deacons are to make known to the bishop cases of sickness, for it is regarded as a great consolation by the afflicted to receive a visit from him.†

We find in the Second Book of the "Apostolical Constitutions" a somewhat idealised picture of the episcopal office, which, in its general features, corresponds perfectly to the Church of the third century. We there read: "Thou, then, like a shepherd who is full of love and solicitude for his flock, count thy sheep. Seek those who are gone astray, after the example of our God, the Father of mercies, who sent his Son to seek the lost sheep upon the mountains, and to bring it back on His shoulders. Follow His footsteps, O bishop; go after that which is lost; restore that which has wandered. The Church is the harbour of the shipwrecked. Be like the physician, who is at once full of skill and sympathy; carry healing to all whom sin has wounded, for it is not the whole but the sick who have need of health. Thou art the physician of the Church of Christ; offer to each the remedy that may heal his sickness. Remember that the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep, and that He carries the weak ones in His arms."‡

The utmost care would be needed in the appointment of men to fulfil a function so important, and hence very solemn guarantees of moral fitness were demanded

* "Const. Apost." viii. 47. † "Const. Copt." ii. 56.
‡ "Const. Apost." ii. 20.

of the candidate. His reputation must be unspotted, even among the pagans; he must be known for his liberality to the poor, his sobriety, purity, freedom from ambition, his peaceable spirit, and his gentleness. It is well if he is not married; that at least, if he have been married, it has been only once, and that he keeps his children with him.*

Obviously a serious examination must take place before the election, properly so-called, if it is to be ascertained that all these conditions are fulfilled. The deacons and elders were charged with the presentation of the candidate, except in the case already mentioned of the very small Churches.† These sought the assistance of the bishops of the neighbouring Churches, and asked their prayers.‡ We must not suppose that this preliminary examination and presentation of the candidate formed the principal condition of the ultimate nomination, so that the election itself became a mere formality. This is by no means the case. The election is the essential act. The fundamental article of the appointment of bishops stands thus in the most ancient document we possess: "Let the bishop be appointed after having been chosen by all the people and found irreproachable."§ It is not even enough that the candidate is found acceptable after being

* Καλὸν μὲν εἶναι ἀγύναιον, εἰ δὲ μή, ἀπὸ μιᾶς γυναικός, παιδείας μέτοχος. "Const. Copt." i. 13.

† This seems to be conveyed by the word, ὀνομασθέντος καὶ ἀρέσαντος. Ibid. ii. p. 31. We see that the candidate was nominated and designated before being accepted. The elders are evidently charged with this presentation. We have shown that in the small Churches three men appointed by the neighbouring Churches preside, instead of the elders, at the election of the bishop.

‡ Συνευδοκούντων πάντων τῶν ἐπισκόπων. "Const. Copt." ii. 31.

§ Ἐπίσκοπος χειροτονείσθω ὑπὸ παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ ἐκλελεγμένος. Ibid. ii. 34.

submitted to the most serious examination. The election will be final only after a solemn ratification. The week preceding his consecration is spent by the Church in prayer without ceasing. "O God," she cries, "show Thy love to this man whom Thou hast prepared for us."* When the great day has arrived—a Sunday being always chosen—the bishops of the neighbouring parishes assemble, with the deacons and elders of the Church for which the bishop is needed. The president of the assembly puts the following question to the faithful and to the clergy: "Is this the man to whose direction you wish to commit yourselves?" If the reply is in the affirmative, the presiding bishop asks again: "Do you bear him witness that he is worthy of this high and holy office? Has his piety been pure towards God? Has he walked justly with men? Has he exercised due discipline in his own house? Has his life been irreproachable? Is he free from any charge against him, and are the members of his family free also?" Three times the same questions are put, after which the votes are taken. When the choice has thus been determined with perfect freedom, the assembly joins in prayer, and the bishop proceeds to the laying on of hands.† The consecrating bishop stands, surrounded by his colleagues, the elders and deacons. He places his hand on the candidate. Sometimes an elder is deputed to take part in this solemn act.‡ Subsequently it became the custom to have a copy of the Gospel held by the deacons over the head of the consecrated

* "Const. Ethiop." canon 2. Bunsen, "Hippolytus," ii. 27.
† "Const. Apost." viii. 4. ‡ "Const. Ethiop." canon 2.

bishop. The bishop presiding at the ceremony speaks in these words: "O our Lord and Master, Thou who alone art eternal and supreme; Thou who livest ever, who wast before the ages; Thou, the truth, the only wise; Thou who art love, the God and Father of Thine only Son Jesus Christ; Thou, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation; Thou who hast determined the bounds of Thy Church by Thy power and Thy love; Thou who didst choose from the beginning the holy seed of Abraham, raising up within it a royal priesthood, pour out now the virtue of Thy sovereign Spirit. O Thou who holdest the hearts of all, give to Thy servant chosen to be bishop, to feed Thy flock without reproach by night and by day, and to offer to Thee in lowliness and purity of heart the odour of an acceptable sacrifice, by Jesus Christ Thy Son, our God and Saviour, by whom and the Holy Spirit be honour and glory to Thee, world without end."*

The terms themselves of the prayer of consecration set aside all idea of magical or sacramental grace. It refers only to the spiritual qualifications necessary for a bishop, and to the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are requisite for the due fulfilment of his office. There is no ground for inferring that he found in the office itself any new and peculiar virtue.

At the conclusion of the prayers, the consecrating bishop proceeds to the laying on of hands, and then the new bishop exchanges the kiss of brotherhood with his colleagues. The deacons, accompanied by the elders, bring him the elements of the Eucharist, and he blesses them. Then the newly-consecrated bishop

* "Const. Apost." viii. 5.

gives his benediction to the assembly. "The Lord be with you all," he says. "And with Thy Spirit," is the rejoinder of the assembly. The bishop adds, "Lift up your hearts; let us render praise to the Lord." "As is most just and due," replies the assembly. They then proceed to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.* When persecution renders so large a concourse impossible, and only one bishop can take part in the consecration, the case has to be submitted to the bishops of the neighbouring Churches, and nothing is to be decided without their authorisation. †

The elder or priest occupies the second rank in the Church, after the bishop. Though subordinate, he is yet associated in everything with the bishop. ‡ When a young Church has chosen a bishop with the appointed forms, it is for him to associate with himself as soon as possible two or three elders among the members of his flock, who show themselves worthy to take part in his sacred work. They must be tried men, known by their Christian charity, and gifted with that largeness of heart which ignores mere outward distinctions. Their model is the four and twenty elders shown to us in the Book of Revelation, on the right hand and on the left of the heavenly altar. This division is regarded as symbolical of the twofold functions of the elders. The one part are associated with the bishop in the celebration of worship, and the other in the teaching and care of souls. When an important case of discipline arises, and the delinquent does not yield to the first exhortations, all the elders unite to sit in judgment on the

* "Const. Copt." ii. 31. † "Const. Apost." viii. 27.
‡ "Const. Ethiop." canon 4.

question.* Thus, three centuries after the time of St. Paul, we find the same distinction which he established between the elders devoted to the pastorate, properly so called, and those who cultivated the gift of teaching. For a long time the elders were chosen by the people; subsequently, their election was entrusted to the clergy alone. †

The ordination of an elder resembles in all points that of a bishop, with only the necessary modifications corresponding to his lower rank in the Church. The bishop, surrounded by all the elders and deacons standing, lays his hands on the candidate and pronounces a prayer of consecration, which has come down to us thus:—"O God, look down upon Thy Church; grant to it to increase and to see its pastors multiplied; may they receive the strength they need to devote themselves in word and deed to Thy service. Look now on Thy servant who is raised to the office of elder by the vote of his brethren. Fill him with the spirit of love and of wisdom, that he may lead Thy people with a pure heart; even as Thou didst command Moses to give elders to Thy chosen people, filling them with Thy Spirit. And now, Lord, preserve to us the spirit of Thy grace. Fill Thy servant with the virtue that heals, with the word that teaches in meekness, so that he may instruct Thy people and serve Thee in uprightness, fulfilling without reproach all the duties of his office." ‡

* "Const. Copt." i. 14.

† Ψήφῳ καὶ κρίσει τοῦ κλήρου. Ibid. viii. 16. These words date evidently from a period when clericalism had fully triumphed, and may be only an interpolation subsequent to the Council of Nicæa.

‡ "Const. Copt." viii. 16.

This prayer shows how nearly the office of elder approached that of bishop. The elder might even baptise and confirm the catechumens, but to the bishop alone belonged the right of consecration.*

The diaconate forms the third office in the Church. The functions of the deacons are better defined than at the beginning. They are to attend to the material part of Divine worship; they prepare all that is necessary for its celebration, assist the neophytes in the ceremony of baptism, and pass from hand to hand the bread and wine of the communion, after having separated those who may take part in it. Their special office is always the care of the poor. They are not only to distribute alms, but also to show themselves full of generous kindness. Their hand is to be always open. They are as carefully to avoid insolence towards the poor as servility towards the rich, remembering themselves, and remembering all the words of Christ: "I was an hungered, and ye fed me." † If they have no share in the government of the Church, they have nevertheless a great influence over the Christian people among whom they live. They are to use this influence to instruct some, to reprove others, and to give salutary warning whenever needed. ‡ Those who despise and resist them are to be cut off from the Church. We see that the deacons were called upon to take an important part in cases of discipline. It was also their duty to make the bishop acquainted with cases of illness. The deacons were chosen by the people on the favourable testimony of three members of the

* Ὁ γὰρ πρεσβύτερος λαμβάνει μόνον, ἀλλ' οὐ δίδωσι κλῆρον. "Const. Copt." ii. 33. † Ibid. i. 16–18.

‡ Οὓς μὲν νουθετοῦντες. Ibid. i. 16.

Church; they then received a simple laying on of hands from the bishop alone, which had none of the solemnity of a consecration, properly so called. In the prayer presented to God on their behalf, request was made that the spirit of Stephen might descend upon them, as the mantle of Elijah upon Elisha.*

The relations of the three orders of this elementary hierarchy are defined with precision in the eighth book of the "Apostolical Constitutions." Perhaps the state of things there indicated is a little in advance of the commencement of the third century. It certainly precedes the very important transformation of the ecclesiastical office which we shall find had taken place before the Council of Nicæa. According to this document, the bishop receives the benediction only from the hand of a bishop, never from the elders. He consecrates the elements, and exercises in all its rigour discipline over his clergy, but he may not alone exercise the same right in the case of any of his colleagues in the episcopate. The elder receives the benediction from the bishop, but he in his turn may bless the other elders. He lays his hand upon the bread and wine of the communion, but he does not consecrate them: he may only use discipline towards his subordinates. The deacon receives the benediction, but never gives it. He can neither baptise nor celebrate the communion.† In case of necessity, however, these rules are waived, and the deacon may perform the functions of the elder, or even of the bishop, when visiting persons dangerously ill.‡

* "Const. Apost." viii. 17, 18. † Ibid. viii. 28.

‡ Tertullian, "De Baptismo," 17. In the time of Cyprian, when the hierarchy was very strictly defined, the deacon might perform the office of

Below the diaconate, the Church had also instituted another subordinate office or inferior order—that of reader, thus showing the importance that was attached to the reading of Holy Scripture in worship. Care is taken that lips which utter the Divine oracles shall be pure. No one is allowed to be a reader if profane mockery or idle words have polluted his lips. The reader is to bring his life into accord with the holy teachings he delivers to the Christian people. It is fitting that he who reads the gospel be a faithful workman before God, and comprehend the importance of his task.* The reader does not receive the laying on of hands. The bishop simply hands to him the sacred book, and offers prayer for him. †

It appears that even at this time the deacons were assisted by sub-deacons.‡

All the forms of consecration are dispensed with in the case of confessors who have been in bonds for the name of Christ. Their sufferings are considered the most valid of all initiations. If one of these is chosen to be elder or deacon he is at once appointed. But if he is appointed to be a bishop he receives the imposition of hands. The imprisonment which he has suffered for the name of Christ is regarded as sufficient preparation for the highest offices; he could have received no higher preparation even had he passed through the schools of the most illustrious apologists, such as Clement of Alexandria or Origen. He is only required to offer the

a bishop for a dying person. Cyprian, "Epist." 18. This latitude must have been allowed far more readily at an earlier period.

* Ὁ γὰρ ἐμπιπλῶν ὥτα ἑτέρων μᾶλλον προσήκει αὐτῷ εἶναι ἐργάτην πιστὸν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ. "Const. Copt." i. 15.

† "Const. Apost." viii. 22; "Const. Copt." ii. 35.

‡ "Const. Apost." viii. 21.

eucharistic prayer before the Church,* and even in this, incorrectnesses of form are passed over, provided only he pray entirely in a right faith. Consecration was also considered unnecessary in the case of those who had the gift of healing the sick. No official confirmation could indeed be required in such a case, since the work was its own evidence. The same rule applied to exorcists, because the sovereign power of God was manifest in them.† Celibacy was not imposed on the bishops and elders, although a prejudice in favour of it began to be shown, and second marriages were increasingly regarded as incompatible with office in the Church. The clergy are not as yet distinguished by any particular vestments; they mix, in fact, in the common life of the people.

The great art of primitive Christianity was to make all special aptitude conduce to the general good, and to utilise every sort of gift. Not content with having raised woman from her former low estate, and given her at the family hearth her sweetest and holiest sphere, it also found a place for her in the work of the Church, when the tender and sacred links of the family had been broken. The pagans themselves took note of this fact. Pliny the Younger prosecuted in the tribunals Christian women whom he called by a name which points to the office of deaconess.‡ Lucian, in his biting pamphlet, "Peregrinus," ridicules some aged women who carried food to the Christian prisoners.§

* Πᾶς κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ προσευχέσθω. "Const. Copt." ii. 34.

† Ibid. ii. 39.

‡ "Ministræ." Pliny the Younger, "Ep." x. 96.

§ Lucian, "Peregrinus," § 12.

He is evidently alluding to the *widows*, who as early as the times of the Apostles were not only succoured by the Church, but also employed by it,* though it is difficult to discover exactly in what their duties differed from those of the deaconesses proper, whom we have already mentioned. Perhaps there was no difference between them, except in age: the deaconess does not seem to have been under such strict conditions in this respect as the widow.

At the close of the second century, the widows of the apostolic age bore the name of female elders.† There are still deaconesses, but they fulfil almost the same office. As there were no clerical orders for women, their different functions were not very clearly distinguished. The elder differed from the deacon as forming part of the clergy, and receiving consecration. But there was no such distinction in the case of the female elder, for the invariable rule of the Church was that no woman could be invested with any sacerdotal character.‡ Thus the female elder received no laying on of hands; her name was simply mentioned before the Church, when she was admitted to join the other widows holding the same position. There was then no essential difference between the female elder and the deaconess. The former appears, however, to have more especially devoted herself to prayer; this was her principal calling, like Anna the prophetess.§ She was to feed the sacred flame of devotion, to implore the consolations of God for tried Christians, and to seek His light. In the small

* 1 Tim. v. 9.

† Ἡ πρεσβῦτις. "Const. Copt." ii. 37; "Const. Apost." iii. 5.

‡ Οὐδὲ προσφέρει οὐδὲ λειτουργεῖ. "Const. Copt." ii. 37.

§ "Const. Apost." iii. 1.

Churches two widows were appointed to watch unto prayer, while the duty of a third was to wait on sick women: all three were to let the elders know of houses where suffering rendered their help necessary.* Perfect sobriety was required of these widows, and entire disinterestedness. They were only admitted after they had been long widows, and had been proved by time, "for the evil passion grows old with one who will permit it a place."† That which is to be most carefully guarded against is the possibility of a second marriage. Ascetic ideas will be easily grafted upon this institution, hence the condition of age comes in the end to be regarded as far less important than complete chastity. Widows of forty years of age were admitted, and even young virgins.‡ We have in this institution thus transformed the first germs of the religious orders of women. We are as yet, however, very far from anything of this kind, for it is specified that the virgin who gives herself to the service of the Church is not to receive the laying on of hands. "She remains a virgin by her free will alone." The life of chastity is her choice, and its design is not the reproach of marriage, but the service of God.§

The office of deaconess corresponds to that of deacon, as the duties of the female elder to those of the elder. She performs the same functions for her own sex. The care of the poor is her chief charge. She assists

* "Const. Apost." i. . 17.

† Τὰ γὰρ πάθη ἴσθ' ὅτε σύγγηρα ἀνθρώποις. "Const. Copt." ii. 37.

‡ Χῆραι καὶ παρθένοι πολλάκις νηστευέτωσαν. Ibid. ii. 47. Tertullian speaks of a virgin in this class under twenty years of age. "De Virgin. Velandis," 9. Widows under forty were also admitted. Augustine, "Archæology," i. 253.

§ Γνώμης ἐστὶ τὸ ἐπαλθων, οὐκ ἐπὶ διαβολῇ τοῦ γάμου ἀλλ' ἐπὶ σχολῇ τῆς εὐσεβείας. "Const. Apost." viii. 24.

the female catechumens in the ceremony of baptism, and occasionally takes part in their religious instruction.* The deaconess was expected to watch over the conduct of the women, and to report on it to the elders and the bishop. The prohibition of the laying on of hands on the deaconesses does not seem to have been absolute, for we find traces in the documents of a ceremony and prayer of investiture on her entering upon her duties.†

The Church, in creating offices for women, was careful not to close the door of Christian usefulness against any. We read in the Coptic document: "If any one among them, being neither a female elder or a deaconess, desires to do good, let her follow the impulse of her heart, for these holy deeds are the most precious treasures of the Lord."‡ Thus clearly is the universal priesthood of compassionate love recognised. It mattered little to the Christian woman that she was excluded from the ecclesiastical hierarchy, since she might rise to the highest rank in the order of charity. An obscure tradition, a supposed fragment of the Gospel history, found currency in the East on the subject of the position given to woman in the Church. After showing that Jesus Christ had Himself excluded woman from the upper chamber where He instituted the Lord's Supper, thus showing

* "Const. Apost." viii. 29. The council of Carthage (iv. c. 12) has the following rule with regard to deaconesses which evidently referred to an ancient usage: "Ut possint apto et sacro sermone docere imperitas et rusticas mulieres, tempore quo baptizandæ sunt: qualiter baptizatori interrogatæ respondeant, et qualiter accepto baptismo vivant.

† "Const. Apost." viii. 19.

‡ Εἴ τις ἑτέρα βούλοιτο ἐργαγαθεῖν ποιείτω κατὰ τὴν προθυμίαν αὐτῆς. "Const. Copt." i. 17.

that she was to take no part in the consecration of the Divine repast, the Christians of Egypt related that Martha of Bethany, probably irritated at the exclusion, was surprised and indignant to see a strange smile on the face of Mary. She asked her the reason of her mirth. "I smile," said Mary, "because He was teaching us, saying that our weakness shall be saved by His strength."* What does this mean if not that woman is raised by Christ above all which seems like inferiority, and finds at His feet the sovereign power of love. Feminine charity, personified in the lowly Mary, has kept its heavenly smile; it is little grief to the Christian woman that she is excluded from the great offices in the Church, since it is hers to exercise the most glorious and effectual of all ministries.†

The distribution of alms, the celebration of worship, the agapæ, and the maintenance, at least in part, of the Christians holding office in the Church, entailed great expense. No tax was levied of any member of the Church. "No one is under any constraint," says Tertullian; "every gift is to be free."‡ If in some Churches they followed the advice of Irenæus, that they should at least not come behind the generosity of ancient Israel in bringing to God the tithes and first-fruits of all their goods, this was not a general law.§

* Τὸ ἀσθενὲς διὰ τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ σωθήσεται. "Const. Copt." i. 21.

† If the context is observed, it will be seen that no other meaning can be given to this obscure dialogue between Martha and Mary. In the Coptic document it follows immediately on the declaration that the woman is excluded from taking any public part in worship. Martha, the practical and positive woman, cannot comprehend how Mary can be joyful in so inferior a position. Mary's reply refers to the Divine compensation which weakness finds in the strength of Christ which rests upon her, lifting her up and glorifying her by love.

‡ "Nemo compellitur sed sponte confert." Tertullian, "Apol." c. 39.

§ Irenæus, "Contra Hæres." iv. 34.

Special care was taken to preserve the spontaneous character of all religious acts and spiritual benefits, remembering that all these proceed from a grace which is not sold but given. "The Holy Spirit is not to be bought with money," said an ancient synod, "and we will guard against anything that might bear any semblance of making merchandise of the sacraments."* The custom was established of laying the offerings for the Church upon the eucharistic table before the celebration of the Lord's Supper. When the first-fruits of the harvest were thus brought, the bishop offered a thanksgiving prayer to God for His gifts.

It would be an error, however, to regard this custom as an ordinance of the Church. Subsequently, towards the end of the third century, in the time of Cyprian, we find that there are collectors who gather from house to house gifts for the poor;† but never till the council of Nicæa is there any trace of regular subsidies levied for the bishops and elders. The principle is indeed recognised that these have a right to be supported, but only in the measure of their necessities, and without being themselves released from labouring for their own maintenance. An inscription in the catacomb of St. Callisthus informs us that a certain Dionysius, priest of the Church of Rome, was at the same time a physician.‡ "The elders, elected by the Church," says Tertullian, "preside in our midst, having gained to themselves this honour, not by payment of money, but

* Οὐδὲ γὰρ πεπραμένη ἡ χάρις οὐδὲ χρήμασι τὸν ἁγιασμὸν τοῦ πνεύματος μεταδιδῶμεν. "Concil. Trull." ii. c. 23. Such limitations apply, *a fortiori*, to an earlier time. "Neque prætio ulla res Dei constat." Tertullian, "Apol." 39. † "Sportulantium fratrum." Cyprian, "Ep." i. 1.

‡ Rossi, "Roma Sotterranea." i. 21.

by the good report of their brethren, for no Divine thing is to be acquired for money. Every one gives as he can. These free-will offerings of piety are not spent in feastings, but are devoted to feed the poor, orphans, and aged slaves, to succour the shipwrecked, and those exiled in mines and distant islands.* It was not till long after, at what period it is difficult to determine, that a certain proportion was regularly set aside from the offerings of the Church for the maintenance of the clergy.†

Thus we see that the organisation of the various Churches was in process of transformation at the commencement of the third century. Upon this slippery descent it is difficult to mark each separate step towards the hierarchy. The tendency in this direction is abroad in all the general influences of the time, and these gradually modify the institutions of the Church. Hence it is impossible to trace with precision the various phases of the evolution up to the time when, like the crystal disengaging itself from the liquid in process of ebullition, it comes forth with fixed and definite forms from its previous fluctuating condition. Nevertheless, the great features of the primitive organisation will be as yet retained: it will not be till after the defeat of the illustrious champions of liberty that the ecclesiastical office will be decidedly transformed into a priesthood alike in principle and in fact.

* Tertullian, "Apol." 39.

† "Const. Apost." viii. 30.

CHAPTER III.

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCHES AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

A STERN discipline was the necessary consequence of the principles upon which the Church at this time rested. Being firmly resolved to constitute itself a religious society, the members of which should be united by the bond of one faith and holy practice, the Church was not content with barring its doors against indifference and worldliness; it was no less careful to exclude from its midst anything that might dishonour it or bring disgrace on the Christian profession. It was not enough to separate, in the first instance, the chaff from the wheat; it was needful to keep a constant watch against their ever becoming intermingled. Although Judaism was a national religion, and, unlike Christianity, received its members by birth, the synagogue yet exercised a certain discipline, and could pronounce sentence of condemnation which excluded the offender from the common feast. This was a sort of excommunication. The man born blind, who was healed by Jesus Christ, became the subject of such a sentence.*

The great difference between the discipline of the synagogue and that of the Church, was that the former being exercised in the name of theocratic power, pro-

* John ix. 34.

duced civil effects, while the latter extended only to the religious sphere. The religious community had been constituted a spiritual tribunal to judge its members before it actually existed at all. Jesus Christ had ordained, as it were in anticipation, that the differences between Christians should be brought before the Church.* In the time of St. Paul discipline was rendered necessary by the scandals in the Church at Corinth, and it might be said that it sprang up full armed. The delinquent is solemnly excluded from the community, in the name of the Lord Jesus, by the Church assembled for that purpose: he is thrown back into the paganism from which he came out in baptism, and is thus delivered over again to the dominion of Satan.† The offender excommunicated from the primitive Church is left to the judgment of Christ, whose second advent is daily expected. He is summoned to appear at the great assize of the infallible Judge. Such is the meaning of the Christian anathema thus expressed: "Maranatha! The Lord comes."‡ This is more in accordance with the spirit of the gospel than the malediction of the synagogue. The restoration of the penitent sinner was as public as his exclusion, and was made the occasion of a solemn act of the Church.§

Discipline naturally grew with the extraordinary progress of Christian missions. Miraculous as was the fishing for souls in the stormy waters of paganism, the gospel net necessarily brought to land much that was fit only to be cast away. We have, however, no positive proofs of an extended organisation of ecclesiastical

* Matt. xviii. 17.
‡ Μαραναθά. Ibid. xvi. 22.
† 1 Cor. v. 1–7.
§ 2 Cor. ii. 8, 11.

discipline until the close of the second century. There is such discipline, since the Church preserves its purity, and is on her guard against all that might impair it. The "Pastor Hermas," in spite of his excessive severity, admits the possibility of restoration, if the pledge taken in baptism has been broken only once. Baptism is peculiarly the act of repentance. God, in His goodness, has permitted repentance to be renewed, but it cannot be so twice, lest the hope of repeated restoration give the rein to evil passions.* Such are the declarations of the angel of repentance to Hermas. The reference here is obviously to an ecclesiastical act of restoration, not to individual and secret repentance.

The repentance of the apostate is of the same nature as that of the penitent at the time of baptism: it is consequently equally solemn and public in its character. We have no detailed description of this public act, or of its conditions. Tertullian gives us an account of the discipline of the Church in full exercise. He says: "There is reason to believe in the correspondence between the free judgment of God and that of the Church, when the Church has pronounced the exclusion of the delinquent from its prayers, its assemblies, and all holy things. This discipline takes three forms,—exhortation, censure, and condemnation, the consequence of which is exclusion."† Exclusion is based upon the same grounds which forbade admission to the school

* "Pastor Hermas," ii. Mandata, iv. 3. The author contradicts himself in one passage of the similitudes (vi. 3), in which he sets aside all possibility of repentance after baptism. In this he is clearly in advance of the general opinion of his day.

† "Ibidem exhortationes, castigationes et censura divina." Tertullian, "Apol." 39.

of catechumens, and which we have already carefully detailed. Every act or occupation by which a candidate was rendered ineligible for baptism was regarded as still more incompatible with the Christian profession. We have positive evidence of the identity of discipline in both cases. We know how strictly the Church interdicted its catechumens from any callings connected with idolatry or the theatre. We see from a letter of Cyprian that he excludes from the Church a professor of stage declamation.* It is certain that the earlier period was not less austere in its discipline than the second half of the third century. We conclude then that the same discipline by which admission to the Church was guarded, was applied to all its members.

A sentence implies a tribunal. The Church sought no other tribunal than her own bishops and elders. A general surveillance was exercised by the deacons over the men, and by the deaconesses over the women. The deacons commence by exhorting the delinquents.† If these resist, the deacons have the right of excluding them from the Church.‡ If the deacons themselves are in fault, they come under the jurisdiction of the elders, and these in their turn are judged only by the bishop.§ We do not mean by this that theirs is the only case of discipline in which the bishop takes part. As general director and guardian of the Church, the bishop can never be an indifferent party in so grave a question. We have seen that the deacon was bound to make him acquainted with the cases of sickness. How then can we suppose he would leave him in ignorance of scandals

* Cyprian, "Ep.," 2, 1.
‡ Const. Apost." viii. 28.
† "Const. Copt." i. 16.
§ "Const. Copt." ii. 28.

calling for repression? It is probable that the bishop was satisfied with the decision of the deacons in the case of a simple member of the Church, and with that of the elders in the case of a deacon, while he himself pronounced upon an elder who had failed in his duty. The bishop could be condemned only by another bishop, which implies the possibility of recourse to neighbouring Churches. Disciplinary power is always exercised by the higher over the lower. We trace to this period one of the gravest abuses that arose out of the time of fiery persecution: the word of a martyr is already allowed to have extravagant weight in the restoration of penitents.* Subsequently this practice became the occasion of most serious controversies, especially at Carthage.

We cannot discover in our documents any precise rules about the restoration of penitents: they are not subjected to any disciplinary penalties by way of expiation, nor is there any trace of clerical absolution which would have implied a priestly power. These grave innovations date from a later period; they are altogether foreign to the Church of the third century. The prayer pronounced on behalf of the penitents at the close of the public worship before the celebration of the communion, is only a touching invocation of the Divine mercy, containing no hint of a mercenary penitence, which should purchase pardon from heaven at the price of so much suffering. It is thus expressed: "We all pray fervently for our penitent brethren. May the God of all mercy lead them in the path of repentance. May He accept their return to Him and their confession.

* Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," 22.

May He put Satan under their feet shortly, delivering them from the snares of the devil and the assaults of the demons. May He deliver them from every evil word, from every forbidden act and sinful thought. May He pardon their offences, both voluntary and involuntary. May He destroy the writing which was against them, and put their names again in the Book of Life, purifying them from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit. May He receive them again into His holy fold, for Thou knowest, O Lord, that we are but dust. Who among us shall dare to say that he has a pure heart, or is free from sin? Are we not all guilty before Thee? Once again we entreat Thee earnestly for them, knowing that there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. Grant them to renounce every evil way, and to give themselves to a holy life. May the God who loves mankind, speedily accept their prayers, and restore them to their lost estate, and grant them again the joy of His salvation. May He strengthen them with His mighty Spirit, so that they do not again break His law, but may be judged meet to share in our Divine mysteries, and, being found worthy to be adopted into Thy family, may obtain eternal life.

"With one voice we pray for them. O God, have mercy, save them, restore them in Thy tender mercy. Arise ye now before God by His Christ; bow the head and pray."

Then the bishop takes the place of the deacon, and prays in these words: "God, Eternal and Almighty, Sovereign of the universe, Judge of all, Thou who hast shown by Christ that the end of the creation was man; Thou who hast given him both the inward and the

written law, that he may live as becomes a reasonable creature; Thou who hast granted to the sinner Thy mercy as the pledge that Thou dost accept his repentance; look upon these penitents who bow their hearts before Thee as their heads are bowed. Thou willest not the death of the sinner, but his repentance; Thou willest that he should turn from his evil way and live. Thou wast pleased to accept the repentance of Nineveh. Thou wouldst have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Thou art He who dost receive with fatherly tenderness the prodigal son, who hath wasted his substance in riotous living, when he repents. And now receive in mercy these suppliants who come back to Thee, for there is none who sinneth not against Thee. If Thou Lord shouldest mark our iniquities, O Lord who shall stand? Art not Thou the God of mercy? Restore Thou these to their former honour and dignity in Thy Church, by Christ, our God and Saviour, by whom be glory to Thee in the Holy Spirit, world without end."*

It is clear that the conditions of restoration are still entirely spiritual. There is no priestly caste holding in its hands the keys of the Divine mercy, and claiming to pronounce direct absolution upon the sinners. The mercy of God is invoked upon them by their companions in weakness and frailty, who smite on their own breasts as sinners, and assume no superiority over their brethren. The penitents are brought not to a priest, but to Him who received the woman who was a sinner, and the publican—to the Father who clasps the prodigal son in his arms, nay, who goes to meet him

* "Const. Apost." viii. 8, 9.

afar off. The fountain of pardon is not sealed; it flows full and free at the foot of the cross. The Church doubtless requires a public act for the restoration of the penitents to her communion, but she does not pretend herself to be the dispenser of grace. She requires the confession of the sinner; she claims the right to verify the reality of his repentance, but she does not put herself between him and God.

The first returning act of the fallen Christian was to come and knock at the door of the Church. This was as important a step as that by which he first took his place publicly among the penitents who were required to withdraw as unworthy before the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It expressed a firm resolve to acknowledge the sins committed, and to forsake them.

In this humble attitude confession was made. Then, after a sufficient time of trial and examination, came the public confession or *exomologesis*, which Tertullian describes with his usual eloquence. "This solemn day is preceded by a time of strict seclusion. The penitent is to be clothed in garments of mourning, analogous to the sackcloth and ashes of the Israelites. He is only to break his fast just to sustain the sinking powers of nature; he is to weep and lament before his heavenly Father; he is to throw himself at the feet of the elders and of all those who are dear to God, desiring that the prayers of all his brethren may ascend on his behalf with his own."* The whole Church takes part in the restoration of the penitents. Public confession is made before it, but the confession is addressed to God, not as

* "Presbyteris advolvi, et caris Dei adgeniculari omnibus fratribus legationes deprecationis suæ adjungere. Tertullian, "De Pœnit." 9. Comp. "Const. Apost." ii. 16.

though He did not know the offence, but because this public retractation is justly His due.*

The Church of the second century recognises God alone as the supreme Confessor of penitents. Restoration is granted only after the first offence. "When the door of innocence has been long closed, and that of baptism is afterwards obstructed, one other way is still opened to the sinning soul. In the vestibule of the Church is placed the door of second repentance, which opens to those who knock, but opens only once."†

Such is the rule of the primitive Church.

The restrictions which Tertullian introduces in his treatise "De Pudicitia," declaring that for adultery and murder there is no remission, are only to be regarded as extravagances of his fierce Montanism.‡ The Church never adopted so rigorous and implacable a rule.

There is no trace during this period of any private confession, as made apart from the public confession, to any officers of the Church. No passage can be brought forward in support of such an institution, which is wholly foreign to Christian antiquity. It dates from the persecution of Decius, a period which gives us an entirely new development of Church discipline, and consequently of ecclesiastical authority.

* "Exomologesis qua delictum Domino nostro confitemur." Tertullian, "De Pœnit." 9.

† "Jam semel, sed amplius nunquam." Tertullian, Ibid. 7; Clement of Alex. "Strom." ii. 13, 57.

‡ Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," 3, 5.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELATIONS OF THE CHURCHES AMONG THEMSELVES AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

THE idea of one great Catholic mother-Church exercising authority over the local Churches and deciding their differences, is in process of development at the close of the second century, but is very far from being realised as yet. The old independence still remains; the separate Churches move, each in its own sphere, unfettered by any regulations imposed from without. One Church may enter into relations with neighbouring Churches, correspond with them, draw close the bonds of Christian brotherhood, as circumstances may suggest; but these relations are all spontaneous, not part of a fixed organisation. There is no central and supreme authority. The sense of unity among Christians has been strengthened under the pressure of common perils. Christendom is no meaningless word; one current of faith, of love, of missionary zeal, runs through all the Churches both of the East and West; the blood of the martyrs which flows in every land is the firmest cement to bind together the living stones of the building, which seeks no support outside of itself. The

ecclesiastical organisation is found in all its essential features in all the Christian communities scattered throughout the vast Roman Empire. They hold the same creed—a creed at once definite and broad—which allows many minor differences, the result of free inquiry, but unfurls above them all the banner of Christ. Every neophyte, on coming up out of the water, repeats the same *Credo*, which echoes from one end of the world to the other. Irenæus truly says that he is the organ of all the Churches throughout the whole world when he expresses the Christian faith in its fundamental articles.* He does not write under the dictation of any ecclesiastical authority, whether individual or collective, which would have fixed the terms of a formal proposition. No. Out of the largeness of his heart, as he beautifully says, comes that fervent and simple confession which expresses the belief in which all Christians lived, and for which they were daily ready to die. There is the same unanimity in the repudiation of the errors which threaten the vital truths of Christianity. These cannot be met at once by a definite protest, because heresy often appears cloaked in a subtle and deceitful guise. Each particular Church may be misled for a while by some artful innovation, but we do not find in one instance that any important section of early Christendom persevered in serious error. Any teaching which really compromised the truth of the gospel was in the end set aside, even before the days of official synods and formal decrees, simply by the true intuition of the Christian heart. The Church has an instinct of self-preservation which

* Irenæus, "Contra Hæres." i. 3.

keeps it safely without any judicial formalities. In this way a spiritual Catholicity gains strength without assuming a fixed and hierarchical form.

There is then as yet no essential change in the condition of things. The Church, regarded collectively as the bride of Christ, is not confined to any visible organisation; it rises above all outward limitations, and in its lofty ideal still soars above imperfect forms and local restrictions. Beneath this ideal Church, which is everywhere, and yet in its entirety is nowhere, since it is a great spiritual fact perceived by God alone, there are individual Churches, self-governing communities, each having its own little hierarchy, but all united in a common bond of faith and love. They thus share, and share in proportion as they are animated by the Spirit of Christ, in that spiritual catholicity which is neither a chimera nor an abstraction, but a Divine reality, which no organisation can either contain or restrain. This will be no longer the case when this spiritual unity becomes identified with a vast organised body called Catholicism, having a visible centre and hierarchy. Then the individual Churches will be absorbed in the mother-Church, to which they will be in subjection. It cannot be denied that Irenæus is leading in this direction when he speaks of the episcopate as a sacerdotal institution based upon apostolic succession. But here again the idea was in advance of the fact. The Christendom of this epoch is not one vast organised society with definite powers, and with a central authority exercised over the local Churches. These retain their liberty, and the unity existing among them is a purely spiritual unity. It results from their

agreement in thought and feeling; hence it extends only to that which is essential, and never imposes on them the yoke of uniformity. This unity, without losing its true character, assumes some outward forms of manifestation which are not the less important because they are spontaneous: thus the Churches correspond by letter. We have shown that this practice, which goes back to apostolic times, was in full exercise in the days of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Clement of Rome, though none of these great bishops ever take the tone of authority. They write, not as ecclesiastical dignitaries addressing inferiors, but as brethren to brethren, offering them counsels, and exhorting them to fidelity in the common peril. We see from the "Pastor Hermas" that the ancient Church attached great importance to these letters, for in one of his visions he receives the command to communicate his revelations to the various Churches for their edification.* One of the finest documents of the second century is the letter of the Christians of Lyons to their brethren in Asia Minor, after the terrible persecution which had decimated their Church. It has no clerical character; it is not the language of a bishop addressing another bishop, or of a metropolitan who transmits his directions or exhortations to an inferior; it is the Church itself in its totality, which, all wounded and bleeding from the fierce onslaught of persecution, and yet victorious, recounts its conflict and its triumph to those brethren of a distant land whence came its first missionaries, and to whom it feels itself bound by strongest ties of love. The opening passage of the letter shows, far

* "Pastor Hermas," Visio ii. 4.

better than any arguments, what Catholicity was in the second century. It commences thus: "The servants of Christ who live at Vienna and at Lyons to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, who have the same faith and the same hope of redemption with us, peace, grace, and glory from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." *

The Churches were not satisfied with letters: in cases of importance they sent delegates. Irenæus, before his election to the bishopric, was charged by the Church of Lyons to repair to Rome, to confer on the troubles caused by the Montanist agitation. The Bishop of Rome, Eleutherus, appears to have wavered for a time in his estimate of a movement which had a grand prestige of austerity about it.† The Christians of Gaul desired to confer with their brethren of Italy, to have an understanding and come to an agreement with them. Delegates were also sent on the same occasion into Asia Minor with letters which might be described as the religious testament of some of the martyr-confessors recently put to death. The object of this deputation was clearly defined: its great aim was to ensure the peace of the Churches.‡ These free interchanges of brotherly love were considered sufficient, without recourse to any imperious subpœnas or formal decrees of doctrine.

The elevation to the see of Lyons of Irenæus, the fervent disciple of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, is a fresh proof of the close relation subsisting between the Churches of the East and the West. When this same

* Eusebius, "H. E." v. 1. † Tertullian, "Adv. Prax." 1.
‡ Τῆς τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν εἰρήνης ἕνεκα πρεσβεύοντες. Eusebius, "H. E." v. 3.

Polycarp came to Rome, Bishop Soter asked him to lay his hand on several elders, in order to show how truly he felt himself one with him in the episcopal office.* The Communion was given without hesitation to foreign brethren.†

It was not only ideas and opinions that were interchanged among the Churches of different countries. The bond of Christian love drew them far more closely together, and they expressed their brotherly affection in many practical forms. The Christian who was journeying found a home wherever he found brethren in the faith. He was loaded with gifts and treated as a son even in that great city of Rome, where he might as easily have been lost as in the desert. Dionysius of Corinth commends Bishop Soter for his truly brotherly kindness to strangers.‡ The Christians carried letters from their bishops with them as credentials on their journeys. These were called *epistolæ communicatoriæ*, because they testified that their bearers were in communion with the Church, and might be received as brethren. In conformity with the generous usages of the first century, the Churches sent abundant alms to their brethren in poverty, whether they were confessors suffering at home or Christians condemned to work in the mines.§

The country Churches seem to have been in a measure dependent upon those in the towns, since, as we have already observed, those which had but very few members were instructed to seek the assistance of three delegates from neighbouring Churches

* Eusebius, "H. E." v. 24. † Ibid. v. 24.

‡ Λόγοις μακαρίοις τοὺς ἀνιόντας ἀδελφοὺς ὡς τέκνα πατὴρ φιλόστοργος παρεκαλῶν. Ibid. iv. 23. § Ibid. iv. 23.

in the election of their bishop. The ceremony of consecration, and cases of episcopal discipline, called in like manner for the assistance of these Churches.* Thus was formed, under the pressure of a simple necessity, the first germ of a diocesan organisation which was afterwards to receive important development. The local Churches were called parishes, that is to say, according to the etymology of the word, colonies or stations on a journey, to remind the Christians that the religious life is a pilgrimage towards heaven.† Some Churches were distinguished from others by a sort of spiritual supremacy: these were the Churches founded by the apostles or their immediate successors, such as the Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Ephesus. They had no jurisdiction over the rest, nor was any one of them a recognised centre of authority in the little community. Their importance consisted mainly in their being the surest guardians of primitive tradition. They are centres, not of power, but of information, and this is no less true of the powerful Church of Rome than of the rest. Irenæus, in a well-known passage already interpreted by us, gives greater prominence to this Church because it comes more within his cognizance than any other.‡ It is evident that these large Churches, by their very position, had a preponderating power. Rome and Alexandria were mighty centres of thought, making their intellectual influence felt far and near. In the advantages thus arising in great measure from purely external circumstances, Christian teaching necessarily

* "Const. Copt." i. 13. † Τὰς παροικίας. Eusebius, "H. E." v. 24.
‡ Irenæus, "Contra Hæres." iii. 3, 4.

shared, and thus the Churches of these cities acquired a pre-eminence which was the natural consequence of a favourable situation, not an established right of priority.

Even at this early period, in important and difficult cases, the Churches of a certain district were wont to assemble in conference or in synods, following the example of the apostles at Jerusalem when they had been called to decide the delicate question how much of the ancient ritual was binding upon the Gentile converts. These synods were not at first periodical; they were simply convened when the necessity arose, and did not constitute a regular deliberative assembly. They were mainly composed of bishops, but this fact does not imply any systematic exclusion of the laity.* That the laity had a full right to take part is abundantly proved by the example of Origen. When, a century later, these irregular conferences are replaced by periodical synods, we shall find the claim of the Christian laity expressly reserved.† These early synods make no pretension whatever either to infallibility or to authority: they are simple conferences convened for the purpose of mutual assistance, co-operation, and counsel; for removing difficulties, guarding against dangers, and especially for repressing rising heresies. Greece was the cradle of the synodal system. This was the natural product of a soil fertile in schools of every description, in which the art of philosophical discussion

* Origen, while still a layman, preached at Cæsarea before an assembly of bishops, which was no doubt of a synodal character. Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 19. See on this whole question of early synods, Hœfele, "Concilien Geschichte," vol. i. introduction and chap. 1.

† "Presbytero et plebibus consistentibus." Fourth council of Carthage. Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," iii. 101.

with all its marvellous instruments was born. "In certain parts of Greece," says Tertullian, "councils or synods are held in the name of all the Churches. In these councils the gravest subjects are discussed: these assemblies, representative of the Christian name, are regarded with great respect."* The primitive synod is already somewhat transformed and idealised by the imagination of the ardent African, yet he attributes to these assemblies, which he exalts so highly, no other function than that of deliberating in common: he does not regard them as constituting any final authority.

The origin of these synodal conventions is perfectly simple. An unknown writer, who had taken a very active part in the resistance to Montanism, before that heresy had as yet become schism, narrates (according to Eusebius) that having learned that the Church of Ancyra in Galatia was troubled by the Montanists, and uncertain† as to their true character, he visited it with one of the elders who shared with him in the government of his own Church.‡ His purpose was to enlighten his brethren of Ancyra on the grave errors which for a moment they had been almost ready to accept. The elders of Ancyra asked him to leave them in writing the substance of his exhortation, and he complied with their wish. Such must have been frequently the occasion of the first synodal gatherings. A pious bishop learns that a Church is in danger of

* "Aguntur per Græcias illa certis in locis concilia ex universis ecclesiis, per quæ et altiora quæque in commune tractantur, et ipsa repræsentatio totius nominis Christiani magna veneratione celebratur." Tertullian, "De Jejuniis," 13.

† Καταλαβὼν τὴν κατὰ πόντον ἐκκλησίαν διατεθρυλλημένην. Eusebius, "H. E." v. 16.

‡ Παρόντος δὲ τοῦ συμπρεσβυτέρου ἡμῶν. Ibid. v. 16.

being led astray by false teaching. He, of his own accord, visits the Church, taking with him, to strengthen his hands, one of his colleagues in the ministry. He confers with the elders of the Church visited, and the results of the conference are preserved in a letter. We have here before our eyes the simple commencement of synodal government in its primitive form. It dates probably from the second century, for, according to the text of Eusebius which we have just quoted, we are still in the period when the elder is scarcely distinguished from the bishop. We find the synodal system somewhat further developed a few years later, when Serapion, bishop of Antioch, wrote, on the subject of the Montanist heresies of Asia Minor, a letter which received the signature of a large number of bishops.* Evidently this mission had been preceded by a conference, in which several Churches had been represented.

The difference of opinion which arose at the close of the second century between the Churches of the West and of Asia Minor, as to the celebration of Easter, gave rise to many ecclesiastical conferences. This dispute had arisen in the previous period, but it had not then troubled the peace of the Church, because it had been considered with reason as referring to a point of form purely secondary. The Christians of Asia Minor held that Easter should always be celebrated on the 14th Nisan, that is, on the day when the paschal lamb was slain for the Jews. Their chief reason was that St. John had placed the crucifixion of the Lord on this date. Their fast lasted only till the evening of the

* *Ὑποσημειώσεις φέρονται διαφόρων ἐπισκόπων.* Eusebius, "H. E." v. 19.

14th Nisan. The entire feast therefore continued only one day, and they did not consider themselves bound to celebrate it on a Friday, but on the 14th Nisan, whenever that occurred. The Christians of the West, on the contrary, would only enter on their Easter celebration on the anniversary Sunday of the resurrection, and would not break their fast till the great time arrived in which alone, according to their view, it was meet and fitting to rejoice. The question acquired new gravity at the close of the second century, when Victor, bishop of Rome, sought to compel the Churches of Asia Minor to conform to the custom of the West. He convoked synods in the East and West to effect his end. Those of Mesopotamia, Pontus, Palestine, and Gaul were of his opinion.* At Cæsarea the party of authority expressed itself with some severity. The synodal letter there written concludes with this injunction: "Be careful to send copies of our letter into all the Churches, so that we may not be chargeable with the errors of those who wander from the way of truth. We have learned that the Church of Alexandria celebrates Easter on the same day as ourselves. We have ascertained by an interchange of letters that there is perfect agreement between us on this matter."† Imperious as this missive is, however, it makes no pretension whatever to the possession of Divine authority or supernatural illumination. The bishops of Cæsarea have conferred with the great Church of Alexandria; they have found that they are following

* Eusebius, "H. E." v. 24.

† Τῆς δ' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν πειράθητε κατὰ πᾶσαν ἐκκλησίαν ἀντίγραφα διαπέμψασθαι, ὅπως μὴ ἔνοχοι ὦμεν τοῖς ῥαδίως πλανῶσιν ἑαυτῶν τὰς ψυχάς. Ibid. v. 25.

the same tradition; and they only give their decision after having elucidated by natural means a simple question of fact.

The synod which was held at Ephesus under the presidency of Bishop Polycrates felt itself in no wise bound to submit. This is clear from the firm language used by this great bishop to Victor in the letter which he sent him in the name of many colleagues: "We shall maintain invariable," he says, "our own observance of Easter on the day accustomed, neither adding nor altering anything. Many and illustrious witnesses of the great resurrection will come forth from their tombs to confirm this ancient practice of Asia Minor, foremost among them John, the beloved disciple, who leaned on the bosom of the Master, the deacon Philip and his holy daughters, one of whom had the gift of prophecy, not to mention a legion of martyrs. These have all followed the tradition of the Gospel and the rule of the Church. And I also, Polycrates, who am the least of all, will not depart from the doctrine of my kindred, for seven of my family have been bishops, and I am the eighth. I have always celebrated Easter on the day of unleavened bread. Therefore, my brother, having arrived at my sixtieth year in the Lord, and having consulted many of the brethren throughout the whole Church, and sustaining myself upon sacred Scripture, of which I have read all the pages, I fear not the threats of any. Those greater than I have taught me to say: It is better to obey God than men."* Polycrates concludes by declaring that he speaks not

* Συμβεβλη, ὡς τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀδελφοῖς καὶ πᾶσαν ἁγίαν γραφὴν διηλυθῶς. . . Οἱ ἐμοῦ μείζονες εἰρήκασι, πειθαρχεῖν δεῖ θεῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρώποις. Eusebius, "H. E." 24.

simply in his own name, but that he could prolong indefinitely the list of the bishops who would be prepared to sign his letter, and who had given it their entire approval.

Thus one synod is not afraid to act in opposition to other synods: the decisions of the Roman west are not held to be binding at Ephesus. Polycrates refers to Scripture and to the tradition of the apostles and their immediate successors. This is for him the paramount authority. Above all ecclesiastical conferences is a higher power, that of God Himself, to which alone he is prepared to yield obedience, in the measure in which the Divine will is made known to him by the sacred Scriptures and by history. It is remarkable that the grand utterance with which Peter had rebuked the tyrannous assumption of the synagogue should be taken up by the Christian conscience as its watchword against the first usurpations of the Roman episcopate. This is the first appeal to the tribunal of Christ against the rising hierarchy. From Socrates to Pascal, the freedom of the soul is sustained in the same manner in the face of purely human authorities, so soon as these infringe on the domain of conscience.

Bishop Victor maintained his claims, and sent letters to the Churches to declare that his opponents at Cæsarea had cut themselves off from the communion of the Church universal. It was but a vain effort.* It went beyond any measure of authority which the Christianity of the second century was prepared to

* Ἐπὶ τούτοις ὁ μὲν Βίκτωρ ἀθρόως τῆς Ἀσίας πάσης ὡς ἑτεροδοξοῦσας ἀποτέμνειν τῆς κοινῆς ἑνώσεως πειρᾶται. Eusebius, "H. E." v. 24.

recognise. Several bishops sent grave remonstrances to Bishop Victor.*

The most illustrious of these, Irenæus, in a synod held in Gaul, wrote to Victor in his own name, and in the name of his colleagues, a letter in which he communicated to him the result of their deliberations.† After arguing the point in question, and giving his approval of the Western mode of celebrating Easter, Irenæus protests in distinct terms against the claim put forth by Bishop Victor to impose uniformity upon the Churches, and to exclude from the Christian community those who maintain some differences in the observance of worship which are in accordance with ancient tradition. "This difference in the celebration of the Easter fast," he says, "does not date from our era: it goes back to the days of our fathers. Those who then presided over the worship of the Church may have been somewhat negligent; they may have failed in wisdom and discretion in bequeathing these customs to the generation following. But peace has nevertheless been preserved among all Christians. Let us live in peace, as our fathers did. Differences in the mode of fasting still leave intact the unity of the faith."‡ Irenæus appeals, in support of this exhortation, to the generous example of one of Victor's predecessors, Bishop Soter, who at the time of Polycarp's sojourn in Rome did not hesitate, in spite of their decided differences on the question of Easter, to accord to him all the rights of a bishop in his own Church. The letter of the Gallic synod was sent not only to

* Πληκτικώτερον καθαπτομένων τοῦ Βίκτορος. Eusebius, "H. E." v. 24.
† Ibid. v. 24.
‡ Ἡ διαφωνία τῆς νηστείας τὴν ὁμόνοιαν τῆς πίστεως συνίστησι. Ibid.

Victor, but to a large number of Churches.* Irenæus claimed as good a right as his colleague of Rome to speak to his brethren throughout the whole world. It was not at all by Victor's suggestion that he had convoked the synod of the Gauls, and no Roman delegate had sat in that synod. Its resolutions had not required any confirmation before they could be promulgated. In fact, the synodal letter contained an energetic protest against the first attempts of the Church of Rome to constitute a central power and to abridge the liberty of the Churches.

The Church of the second century remains, then, to the very close, a stranger to anything like hierarchical centralisation: it knows nothing at all analogous to the papacy. Every bishop has an equal right to bear the name of pope, or *father*. The religious community constitutes a free confederacy, united by living bonds, not by chains. Synods are spontaneous assemblies gathered to confer on difficult questions as they arose, but without any pretension to supernatural wisdom or authority in their decisions. There are no fixed rules for the convocation or for the composition of these assemblies. They have not as yet any official character. We have Churches firmly constituted, finding a bond of spiritual unity in their common faith and love; but the Christianity of these times is widely different from an external catholicity, with one central power binding together all the various communities into one great hierarchical organisation.

* Οὐ μόνον τῷ Βίκτορι καὶ διαφόροις δὲ πλείστοις ἄρχουσιν ἐκκλησιῶν. Ibid. v. 24.

CHAPTER V.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL CRISIS OF THE THIRD CENTURY—ITS GENERAL FEATURES AT ALEXANDRIA.

§ 1.—*General Character of the Crisis.*

THE Church passed through a great crisis between the years 220 and 280, the issue of which was the triumph of the hierarchical party. The victory was far more severely contested than is commonly supposed; the conflict was sharp, especially in the great centres of Christianity, each party being headed by some of the most illustrious representatives of the faith. The liberties of the Church, which had been already abridged in the preceding period, were defended with equal courage and dignity, though it would be idle to deny that they were sometimes compromised by exaggerations much to be regretted. The hierarchical party came out of the conflict fortified on two essential points. In the previous period the episcopate had established its pre-eminence over the office of elder; it had become indubitably the central power of the local Church. It now assumed a new attribute, which gave it a decidedly priestly character—the prerogative of remitting sins. In the second place, ecclesiastical centralisation, the constitution of one visible catholic

Church, advanced at great strides. There was but one more step to be taken, and its organisation would be complete. Such was the twofold result of the crisis which we are now to trace through its various phases.

Fresh causes, apart from those already indicated, are at work to favour the hierarchical tendency. Persecution is in the third century at once more fierce and more frequently recurring than heretofore. In the short intervals during which the Church enjoyed profound peace, she increased with extraordinary rapidity. The crowd of proselytes waiting at her gate becomes more and more numerous; the conditions of admission are relaxed, and spiritual declension is more frequent than of old. A Church largely composed of nominal, superficial Christians, led by impulse rather than by serious personal conviction, is very apt to abandon itself to the clergy, that it may be relieved of the heavy burden of moral responsibility. It is easy to perceive how in such a Church persecution would lead to many defections when it burst forth in renewed and sudden fury. The cases of apostasy are innumerable, and the question of discipline assumes an importance altogether new. Hitherto restoration to Church-fellowship had not been granted to Christians who had denied the faith, but in the middle of the third century this barrier is removed. It is deemed, and not without reason, imprudent to leave the apostates finally excluded from the Church. Their restoration adds to the strength of the episcopate, which now for the first time claims the power of the keys. Hot controversies arise on this subject between the representatives

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of the ancient discipline of the Church and the supporters of the hierarchy. Unhappily, the former carry their rigour to excess, and thus aid the cause of their adversaries, who seem to have on their side reason and moderation. The measure of their indulgence becomes therefore the measure of their increase of authority. Thus that important innovation of the power of the keys, which would not have been accepted by any section in the preceding period, is now received by the Church in its irritation against the extreme Puritans, who would make it bend beneath a yoke of implacable discipline.

The very nature of these debates on internal discipline leads to a notable advance in the constitution of the visible catholic Church, and contributes effectually to the substitution of outward unity for that spiritual and living oneness with which the Church had been so long content. In fact, while the great controversy of the second century turned on points of doctrine, this of the third was directed chiefly to questions of organisation and discipline. The adversaries with whom the Church of this age is at issue are no longer heretics, who deny the essence of the gospel; they are men whose creed is in the main orthodox, or differs only from that generally accepted on secondary questions. The point of difference between them and the heads of the hierarchical party is one affecting the government of the Church, not its doctrine. The opponents of the hierarchical party desire a Church at once pure and free, in which the universal priesthood is the natural corollary of the holiness of all the members. It follows that by these little importance is attached to the episcopal office, while great prominence is given to those moral

qualities which, in their view, alone qualify for service in the Church. Now in these spiritual qualifications there is no monopoly; they may be shared equally among all Christians; indeed, they are found sometimes in a higher degree among the humbler members of the Church—the laity. The hierarchical party is led on by the heat of controversy to maintain precisely opposite views, and to exalt the office at the expense of the spiritual gift or qualification for it, thus preparing the way for the establishment of a sort of holy order more or less independent of the religious life. Irenæus, at issue with Gnosticism in its thousand insidious forms, regarded the episcopate as the guardian of apostolic tradition, the recognised defender of the truth, which it possessed as a heritage by virtue of an uninterrupted succession. Orthodoxy was, in his eyes, the basis of ecclesiastical authority, and the common faith the bond of unity. In the third century all was changed; schismatics took the place of heretics, and separatism occupied far more attention than doctrinal error. Unity was defended rather than dogmatic truth, which latter was, in fact, but feebly assailed. Questions of organisation are the vital questions of the day. A visible catholic unity shows itself more and more plainly as the declared opponent of the ultrapuritanism of that age, which, in order to restore a pure Church, breaks with Christianity as then constituted. The episcopate is regarded pre-eminently as the authoritative guardian of that great body which relaxes its requirements so as to embrace a religious company necessarily of a very mingled character. The resistance offered to the hierarchy, by its very extravagance, drives

the Church to the opposite extreme. But it is not till the close of the third century that the victory is really decided. The opposition did not always display the bitterness and narrowness of the sectarian spirit; there were phases of the contest in which the greatest spirits of the Church were found on the side of liberty. Then the struggle was long and often dubious. It will be our task to describe its course in the principal centres of the Christendom of the third century: at Alexandria, where it resulted in a moderate hierarchy; at Rome and at Carthage, where, owing to various circumstances, it resulted in the complete triumph of the priestly and governing party.*

§ 2.—*The Ecclesiastical Crisis in Alexandria.*

True scientific liberty is not compatible with a spirit of bondage in the social organisation, at least when this mental freedom means something more than a mere idle curiosity of the mind—a sort of aristocratic epicurism, which thinks to mark its superiority by contempt for all that is not purely intellectual. Alexandria was the metropolis of Christian theology, its most brilliant centre. When we remember that the higher class of its catechumens was instructed by Clement and Origen, we can imagine what must have been the intellectual level of this noble Church. Heroic fervour blended with extraordinary breadth of mental culture. Such a Church would naturally be little prepared to bow beneath the yoke of hierarchical authority. The

* On this whole subject—the crisis of the third century—the best book, apart from the original documents, is Ritschl's "Die Entstehung der altcatholischen Kirche." 2nd edition. Bonn, 1857.

Christians of Alexandria were for the most part thinkers, learned men and confessors, ever ready to defend the truth by word and by blood. They were little disposed to become a mute and docile flock beneath the shepherd's crook. Moreover, the ideas that had been instilled into them in the school of the catechists were altogether opposed to the hierarchical tendency. The liberalism of this great Church was manifest in its very constitution, which up to the commencement of the third century maintained, as of old, the equality of bishops and elders. The bishop was always taken from among the elders, and it was from these, his former colleagues, that he received the laying on of hands, without the intervention of any other bishop.*

Popular election, which played an important part in the time of Athanasius, had certainly not been suppressed in the preceding period. The elders of Alexandria, who were twelve in number, had doubtless the right of presenting or *naming* the bishop, if we adopt Jerome's expression.† The people confirmed the designation by their choice, and then followed the consecration of the chosen.‡ If they were capable of conferring the epis-

* "Alexandriæ a Marco evangelista usque ad Heraclam et Dionysium episcopos presbyteri semper unum ex se electum in excelsiori gradu collocatum episcopum nominabant." St. Jerome, "Ep. ad Evangel. Op.," iv. p. 802. † Ψήφῳ τοῦ λαοῦ παντὸς. Gregor. Naz. "Orat.," 24.

‡ The consecration of the bishop, named from among the twelve elders, by the other eleven, is attested by this passage from the annals of the patriarch Eutychius. "Constituit evangelista Marcus ut cum vacaret patriarchatus unum e duodecim presbyteris eligerent, cujus capiti reliqui undecim manus imponentes ipsi benedicerent et patriarcham crearent." Eutych. Patr. Alex. "Annals," interpr. Pocockio, Oxon. 1658, i. 331. When Eutychius asserts that there were no bishops properly so called in Egypt until after Demetrius, he is in direct opposition to the "Coptic Constitution," i. 13.

copal dignity, they must have themselves possessed its essential attribute, for we can only communicate that which we have. It follows that they did not recognise at Alexandria any marked distinction between the two offices. This state of things continued till the bishopric of Heraclas in the year 232. From this date the Church of Alexandria conformed to the general practice, and the election and consecration of bishops were conducted according to the general traditions of the third century. It is therefore averred that an important change in favour of the hierarchical system was made at Alexandria at the very time when the same policy was triumphantly established in Rome. It is impossible to suppose that this change was initiated by Heraclas, who was the successor of Origen in the school of the catechists, and entirely imbued with his spirit. Evidently the way had been prepared by the previous bishop, who had probably already accepted in principle the new order. Now this predecessor of Heraclas was that very bishop Demetrius who was so bitter an adversary of Origen, especially on matters of Church government. We are justified, then, in ascribing this radical and momentous change in the episcopal constitution of the capital of Egypt to the same influences which, a few years before, had led to the exile and excommunication of Origen, and aimed a blow, in his person, at the liberty of the Church, of which he was the most enlightened champion. In order to understand the conduct of Demetrius with regard to Origen, we must have some idea of the breadth of view of the great Alexandrine on ecclesiastical questions.

We have confined ourselves to a brief mention of these views in the summary already given of his theological system, and have presented them simply as a consequence of his general tenets. It will be needful to dwell on them more at large, if we would form a just idea of the gravity of the contest between him and his bishop. The special circumstances out of which it arose were rather the occasion for it than its true cause.

It would be a mistake to suppose that theological differences were really the main ground of Origen's condemnation. This would be to antedate, as it were, the rigid orthodoxy which was the offspring of the great councils, armed to the teeth with anathemas. The most daring challenges of the great Alexandrine were not flung at any official *credo*, and his teachings were in harmony with the fundamental articles of the general belief as defined by Irenæus. There exists no positive proof that Origen was condemned for his doctrine. He complains that the notes of one of his conferences with the Greek heretics had been tampered with, but there is no indication that the two synods which condemned him made any allusion to doctrinal errors as forming the charge against him.* That his theology should have aroused objections and awakened fears, even in Egypt, is perfectly comprehensible; but that it should have led to his excommunication in an age when it was the admiration of the Churches of Syria, and on the point of being represented in the episcopal see of Alexandria itself — this is beyond belief. The deep divergence between the views of Origen and of Deme-

* "Epistola Origenis ad quosdam amicos Alexandriæ." Huet's Edition, "Opera," i. 6.

trius on the subject of Church organisation and authority is the only sufficient explanation of the vehement contest which arose.

Nothing can be more beautiful and broad than the conception of the Church which we find in the writings of the illustrious catechist. He shows with perfect clearness that the Church, pure and spotless, known of God alone, formed of all true believers on earth and in heaven, and united to the holy angels, differs widely from the visible Church, which is the partial and imperfect realisation of the Divine ideal. The former is the Jerusalem above, the Church indeed, into which nothing that defileth can enter.*. The visible Church, on the contrary, is composed of a multitude of separate Churches, each one of which is to the Christian a city built by the Word to be his refuge.† The mission of these Churches is to prepare souls to enter the true and invisible Church, in which they find eternal salvation. The perfect Church is one; the visible Churches, on the contrary, are many; they are still learners in the school of holiness and perfection. They secure the presence of Christ by prayer.‡ These Churches are necessarily of a mixed character; many of their members do not walk worthy of their vocation, and do it dishonour by evil and earthly passions.§ Just as we see on the stage actors who simulate heroism, so the Church has in her bosom those whose profession of religion and piety is but a farce. ‖

* Τῆς μὲν κυρίως ἐκκλησίας. "De Orat." 20. See Redepennong, "Origenes," i. 351–361; Origen, "Opera," i. 229.
† Ἐποίησε γενέσθαι πανταχοῦ ἐκκλησίας. "Contra Celsum," iii. 29.
‡ Origen, "In Cantic. cantic." i.; "Opera," iii. 41.
§ Ibid. "In Matt." xvi. 21; "Opera," i. 751.
‖ Ibid. "De Oratione," 20; "Opera," ii. 229.

Not all the baptized are saved; the sacrament does not stand in the stead of piety. It is necessary to labour without ceasing for the purification of the Churches by means of a discipline which is to be severe and yet moderate, and exercised only with regard to matters which come within the cognisance of man.* For the rest, human judgment is fallible; there is but one judgment which never errs, and it is this which shall distinguish in the temple of God between the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy.† With respect to the restoration of backsliders, Origen remained entirely faithful to the ancient practice, which did not sanction it in cases of apostasy or murder.‡

He lays special stress on the necessity of guarding and purifying the ecclesiastical office, for when this is abandoned to mercenaries, who use it for corrupt purposes, it is degraded, and fails of its purpose. It is then valueless, and the Church is bound to expel from her fellowship any one who profanes it.§

The power of the keys is interpreted on most exalted principles. The keys which open the gate of heaven are chastity and justice: || hence they are not in the hands of the priests alone; every Christian is a priest, and taught of God.¶ He even becomes, after a faithful confession, like the Apostle Peter, for in building like

* Origen, "In Jesu Nave. Homil." xxi. 1; "Opera," ii. 447.
† Ibid. "In Jerem. Homil." 80; "Opera," iii. 279.
‡ Ibid. "In Levitic. Homil." xv. 2; "Opera," ii. 262; "De Oratione," 28, vol. i. 256. Comp. Exod. viii. 5; "Opera," vol. ii. 160.
§ Ibid. "In Jesu Nave. Homil." 7, 5, 6; "Opera," ii. 434, 435.
|| Ibid. "In Matt." xii. 14; "Opera," iii. 530.
¶ Ibid. "Homilia in Numeros," 3; "Opera," ii. 345.

Peter upon the rock, which is Christ Jesus,* he earns the right to bear the symbolic name. The power of binding and condemning is to be used with the greatest moderation even upon heretics; the endeavour should always be, by inquiry into their error, to win them back to truth.† All this was at the opposite extreme from the hierarchical party, who only regarded external organisation, and attached to office a value altogether disproportionate to that of moral worth, ever exalting dignity above piety. With Origen, living piety was the one great essential, the only true qualification of a Christian or bishop, the only channel of Divine grace, finding its full realisation beyond all organisations in the one ideal Church alone, which is raised above all our narrow notions and darkened judgments. It is to this higher sphere that Origen, excommunicated by the hierarchy, looks for his justification.

Let us suppose a bishop inclining to hierarchical notions confronted with this exalted and positive liberalism, and we see at once that a collision is inevitable. Origen, moreover, is not satisfied with laying down general principles; he passed severe judgment upon the Churches of his day, and he protested with indignant eloquence against the ambition of the bishops in the large towns. It was probably after his return from Rome, and his visits to several important centres of Christendom, that he uttered his famous homily on the buyers in the temple. He compared the Churches in which worldliness and love of gain were the ruling

† Origen "In Matt." xiii. 31; "Opera," iii. 613. Peter is here regarded as the type of the perfect Christian, identifying himself with the Divine rock, which is Christ.

† Ibid. "Contra Celsum," v. 63; "Opera," i. 627.

principles, to the profaned temple of Jerusalem. He scourges anew with the whip of small cords these betrayers of their trust. "If Jesus Christ," he says, "wept, with reason, over Jerusalem, is it not yet far more evident that He must weep over the Church, which, having been built for a house of prayer, has been made a den of thieves by the avarice and luxury of some Christians, among whom, alas! we must number many of the leaders of the people of God?" * Making happy use of his allegorical method, Origen compares the bishops who traffic in Churches to the sellers of doves in the temple. He would that their episcopal chair was overturned, like the table of the Jewish money-changers, and he adjures Christ to come and purify His temple with His righteous wrath and stern anathemas.† Those sell the Church who hand it over to bishops, elders, and deacons who are without knowledge or piety, and disposed to use their authority tyrannically. Let those who boast of sitting in Moses' seat, and who sell and hand over the Churches in this way, understand what Scripture means when it says that "the tables of the sellers of doves were overturned." It is time to restore the profaned sanctuary to the purposes of prayer. "Let all those who occupy the episcopal chair, and who love to take the uppermost places, see that they do not so occupy it that if Christ were to return He would overthrow it." ‡

In another homily, Origen attacks with peculiar power the bishops and elders who had relaxed the

* Εἴθε μὴ καὶ τῶν ἡγουμένων τοῦ λαοῦ. "In Matt. Homil." 16, 21; "Opera," iii. 750.

† Μετὰ τῶν καθεδρῶν ἐν αἷς ἐκαθέζοντο οἱ πωλοῦντες τὰς περιστερᾶς. Ibid. "Opera," iii. 751.

‡ Origen, "Id. Opera," iii. 753.

sinews of discipline, and forgotten that they were to be as the open eyes of holiness, to watch over the Church.*

Origen was not aiming at Demetrius in these stringent strictures: he was too just to inflict upon him an unmerited castigation. Nevertheless, those whom he attacked belonged to the hierarchical party: it was possible that the Bishop of Alexandria, who had not visited their Churches, might be ignorant of their practices while he approved their principles. The burning words of his catechist against the spirit of domination, against all that seemed to menace the liberty of the Churches, had a wider application than to the avarice of Zephyrinus or the intrigues of Callisthus. The situation was critical. Demetrius had long been the friend of Origen; he was proud of the lustre which his teaching shed upon the Church of Alexandria. The feelings of base jealousy which Eusebius imputes to him are gratuitously supposed, and rest on no historical basis. That which is certain is that Demetrius sought to reinforce the episcopate, and to restrict the liberties of the Christian community.

If there was one right inherent in the universal priesthood, it was certainly that of bearing testimony before the Church to gospel truth. For a long time, according to the declaration of St. Jerome, all taught. "When ye come together," says St. Paul, "every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." † The most ancient portion of the "Apostolical Constitutions" recognised expressly

* Origen, "In Jesu Nave. Homil." 7, 5, 6; "Opera," ii. 434, 435.
† 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

the right of the laity to teach publicly.* In Alexandria itself, was not the school of the catechists, which was placed at the very threshold of the Church, presided over by a layman? Doubtless religious instruction passed, *de facto*, more and more into the hands of the clergy, because competency for the work was in general associated with the ecclesiastical office; but, *de jure*, it still belonged to all Christians. Origen on his first journey in Syria was called to preach at Cæsarea before several bishops.† No one deemed that his doing so was a breach of discipline and order; the presence and approval of the bishops showed on the contrary that the act was perfectly regular. And yet when Demetrius heard of this preaching of Origen he was much offended. He sent a letter of commination, forbidding him an act which other bishops, his equals, had held to be perfectly legitimate. They appealed in reply to the ancient practice of the Church. They said that "wherever laymen had been found capable of edifying the Church, they had been permitted to speak." ‡ Demetrius wrote a second letter, and sent it by the deacons of the Church at Alexandria, to mark the importance he attached to this prohibition.§ He thus openly declared himself one of the chiefs of the hierarchical party.

Origen made no resistance to the order of his bishop. All appeared tranquil till some years later, about the year 228, when Origen, being again at

* "Const. Apost." viii. 47.

† Ἔνθα καὶ διαλέγεσθαι τάς τε θείας ἑρμηνεύειν γραφὰς ἐπὶ τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας οἱ τήδε ἐπίσκοποι, καίτοι τῆς τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου χειροτονίας οὐδέπω τετυχηκότα. Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 19.

‡ Ὅπου εὑρίσκονται οἱ ἐπιτήδειοι πρὸς τὸ ὠφελεῖν τοὺς ἀδελφούς, καὶ παρακαλοῦνται τῷ λαῷ προσομιλεῖν ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων ἐπισκόπων. Ibid.

§ Αὖθις τοῦ Δημητρίου διὰ γραμμάτων αὐτὸν ἀνακαλήσαντος, δι' ἀνδρῶν τε διακόνων ἐπισπεύσαντος ἐπανελθεῖν εἰς τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν. Ibid.

Cæsarea, was raised to the dignity of elder by the bishop Alexander of Jerusalem and several of his colleagues.* The reason of this step is not difficult to understand. Public preaching had been forbidden to Origen as a layman. The bishops of Syria could not reconcile themselves to the silence of this great voice, which they had invoked, moreover, to oppose the heretics who were troubling Achaia. It was needful for the fulfilment of this mission that he should be perfectly free, and that there should be no hindrance to the exercise of his mighty eloquence. Origen was furnished with a letter of recommendation from his own bishop, which seemed a sufficient guarantee that his consecration could not be objectionable. But it proved nothing of the sort. So soon as Demetrius learned that his catechist had been made deacon without his concurrence, and outside of his own Church, he testified the liveliest indignation. When Origen returned to Alexandria two years later (230), he found himself the subject of the gravest accusations. Not willing to provoke dissension in the Church, he returned to Syria, where he was sure to find a welcome and devoted friends. Demetrius was not disarmed by this departure. He convoked for the first time a synod, in which sat several Egyptian bishops and elders of the Church of Alexandria. Origen was pronounced unworthy to fill his post of catechist, and was excluded from the Church, but no judgment was passed upon the validity of his consecration.†

* Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 23.

† *Σύνοδος ἀθροίζεται ἐπισκόπων καί τινων πρεσβυτέρων κατὰ Ὠριγένους· ἡ δὲ ψηφίζεται μεταστῆναι μὲν ἀπὸ Ἀλεξανδρείας τὸν Ὠριγένην, . . μήτε διδάσκειν.* Photius, "Codex," 118.

Demetrius was not yet satisfied. He convoked a fresh synod, but to this he admitted none of the elders of the Church, probably because they were attached to Origen, and he made a selection even among the bishops. An assembly thus packed was at his command: it completed the work of the first synod, by declaring that Origen could not hold the office of elder.* The decisions of the two synods were sent to all the Churches, and were ratified except by those of Palestine, Phœnicia, Arabia, and Achaia. Demetrius died the following year. Origen might have had himself reinstated by Bishop Heraclas, his disciple and friend, but he preferred not to reopen controversies, from which his great soul recoiled. During the whole of this crisis of his life he displayed remarkable firmness and gentleness, a full conviction of the justice of his cause, but a mind far above petty recrimination. In this way a man honours a noble cause, and commands the respect even of his bitter adversaries.

In order to comprehend the bearing of the act of Demetrius, we must judge of it not by the rules in operation in the period following, when the Catholic Church was fully constituted, but by the institutions of his day. It is false to attempt to explain his conduct simply on the ground of the imprudent asceticism of Origen in his youth. The so-called apostolical canon, which forbids the priesthood to a eunuch, was not then in force in the Church, else the resistance of the Churches of Syria would have been quelled by the simple appeal to an accepted rule, and the elders of

*"Ογε Δημήτριος ἅμα τισὶν ἐπισκόποις Αἰγυπτίοις, καὶ τῆς ἱερωσύνης ἀπεκήρυξε. Photius, "Codex," 118.

Alexandria would not have hesitated, in the first synod, to degrade Origen. It appears that Demetrius had made the mutilation of Origen an objection, but not as the determining reason, and it seems to have had no decisive influence. The true offence was his consecration out of his own Church. But from the standpoint of primitive Christianity there was nothing abnormal or illegal in this. The Church was held united in all its parts by one common bond of faith and love, while each separate Church was free to move at will in its own particular sphere, so long as the bases of the one faith were maintained and respected. Spiritual oneness, independence in internal government of the various Churches—these were the two features which characterised the Christianity of that day. Every Christian, coming from whence he might, felt himself at home in any Church; he shared in its worship, and took part in its inner life. This was the evidence of unity. Independence was guaranteed by the absence of any official interference of one Church in the government of another; while at the same time there was a free interchange of communications, counsels, exhortations, bearing no official character. In such a state of things, what could be more natural than the consecration of Origen by the bishops of Jerusalem, of Cæsarea, and the surrounding towns? As a Christian he belonged to these Churches; there he found his spiritual fatherland and home. Being called to fulfil an important mission in their name, he received the investiture which facilitated his work. He would have been wrong if he had appealed for permission to Alexandria, since this was another ecclesiastical orga-

nisation equally independent; but he was right in receiving the office of elder, to qualify him for his work in the East and in Greece. The first synod convoked by Demetrius, while it showed a strong animus against Origen, did not venture to dispute his consecration. It follows that to that assembly it seemed legitimate. It needed a packed synod to secure a majority to annul the act of the bishops of Syria. There was here, then, a flagrant innovation, else the decision would not have cost so many efforts and intrigues. Demetrius thus took a great step towards placing the constitution of the Church upon a hierarchical basis; he sought to transform it into one great body, subject throughout to the same rules, divided into fixed dioceses, which could never encroach upon one another. He intended that the Churches of the East should bring their ecclesiastical life into exact accordance with that of the other Churches, as though all belonged to the same organisation. Uniformity was thus placed above spiritual unity. The same spirit of domination made itself felt, no doubt, in the internal government of the Church of Alexandria, and hence, as we have indicated, it was during the episcopate of Demetrius that the ecclesiastical revolution, so to speak, was prepared, by which the elders lost their right of consecrating the bishop of the metropolis of Egypt.

The hierarchical system does not seem to have made any further advance at Alexandria till the close of the century; the question of discipline was not raised in that Church. Heraclas and Dionysius continued the tradition of their great teachers and predecessors, a

tradition which accorded ill with the bias of the clerical party. The wind of reaction, which blew more and more over the Christianity of the third century, had nevertheless passed upon Alexandria also. It is important for us to note that the hierarchical tendency had no more declared enemy than Origen, the finest genius of Christian theology. His activity in this sphere has been hitherto too little noticed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRISIS IN ROME.*

REACTIONARY movements gain in violence by the measure of resistance they encounter. At Alexandria the opposition to the hierarchical system was broad and moderate, as might have been expected from the noble spirit of Origen, hence the episcopal party was not driven to any extreme measures. It was otherwise at Rome, in that narrow and fervid atmosphere, in which ecclesiastical prejudices in the Church were not held in check by the development of Christian knowledge. Resistance there was from the first, fierce and determined, such as could not fail to exacerbate the clerical party, and urge them on in their course. Montanism also, by its extreme rigour on the one hand, might incite the victorious party to exaggerate their own principles on the other.

We have considered the sect of Montanus in its complete development, and under the form finally assumed by it, which rendered it irreconcilable with the Church. Even thus, it would be unjust to liken it to those heresies which assailed the fundamental doctrines of the

* See Ritschl, "Entstehung der catholischen Kirche" p. 529. Bunsen, "Hippolytus," i. 91–102. See my article on the Church of Rome in the Second Century, "Revue Chrétienne," 1856, pp. 6–65.

gospel. It is easy to understand how, before grave discussions had opened men's eyes to the dangers to which it exposed the ecclesiastical order, it came to be accepted as orthodox teaching, and gathered numerous adherents, especially in the West, for in the East, near its cradle, its visionaries had talked so loudly, and raised so much opposition, that all were on their guard against them. Rome was a region well adapted to receive Montanism. The Church, at the close of the second century, there formed a world of its own; its members were counted by thousands, and new adherents were added every day, especially when persecution was relaxed or for a while suspended. This multitude of neophytes could not breathe with impunity the impure atmosphere of the Greco-Roman world. It needed a rare firmness to close heart and eyes against the saturnalia of a brilliant and corrupt civilisation, which had at its command the treasures of the world, and seemed impatient to consume them for the satisfaction of its insatiable lusts. The Church of Rome received its members not only from the slave mart, the workshop of the artisan, and the low Jews' quarters. The palace of the Cæsars had been open to it from the time of St. Paul. *Blasés* patricians, high-born ladies, feeling that *ennui* of life of which Seneca speaks, had attached themselves more or less openly to the new religion. They had come with their hands full of gifts; their munificence had ministered to the poor, and had enabled the Church to adorn the tombs of the martyrs. They had probably led on by their example a number of others, who had joined the Church rather under their influence than as a matter of personal conviction. Hence some

relaxation of primitive austerity began to show itself in this great Church.

A party of stern disciplinarians was formed in opposition to this broader and more indulgent school. We have watched its rise with "Pastor Hermas"—a preacher of repentance like John the Baptist. It did not constitute itself into a particular sect, or separate in any way from the Church; it formed the elect body within the Church, and did not always observe the bounds of moderation. The early Montanists who came to Rome gathered around them the Christians in whom the spirit of Hermas still breathed. The Montanists do not appear to have been regarded as innovators: they observed a prudent silence upon their doctrine of continuous inspiration, and made no allusion to the oracles of their prophetess. Had they acted otherwise, they would have at once provoked opposition, and called down upon themselves the reprobation of a Church so temperate and conservative as that of Rome. The fact that they lived there for some time in peace is sufficient evidence of their prudence. They contented themselves with insisting on the moral aspect of their doctrine, protesting against the corruption of the age, and the degeneracy of the manner of life in the Church. They denounced unsparingly all second marriages, enjoined excessive fastings, and stigmatised in strong terms every measure of prudence adopted with a view to escape martyrdom. On all these points they met with much ready sympathy, for they only carried to its logical consequences the rigorous principles which had been already instilled into one section of the Roman Church. The most important element of their teach-

ing, which gained currency probably through individual propagandism, was the idea they entertained of the Church. They would have it absolutely pure, and claimed for it perfect holiness, as if in its earthly and visible condition it were possible for it to realise completely its Divine ideal. From this point of view the ecclesiastical office lost all its importance. "That which constitutes the Church," they said, "is the Holy Spirit in the spiritual man, not the number of bishops."* The predilection of Montanism for a state of ecstasy, and for the supernatural gift of prophecy, led to the same result. In order to maintain this spotless purity of the Church, the disciples of Montanus opposed the public restoration of open offenders; they did not allow that incontinence of life could ever receive pardon before men, and they rejected absolutely that second repentance, which had been universally recognised. The distinction between venial and mortal sins being carried to this extreme, no room was left for the Church to erect her tribunal of penitence. Now, as it was from this tribunal that the episcopal rule was to be mainly exercised, the hierarchical tendency encountered in Montanism its most determined opponent. The hostility between the two parties did not at once assume the form of open warfare. The rupture would have come much sooner but for the intervention of the Christians of Gaul, who seem to have been at first favourable to Montanism. The confessors of Lyons appear to have felt a lively sympathy with these great apologists of martyrdom. The Church of Lyons learned that Montanism was arousing some opposition in Rome,

* Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," 21.

and that Bishop Eleutherus was disposed to condemn it. Irenæus was sent to Rome, as the bearer of a letter recommending peace.* Eleutherus was induced by this powerful intervention to adhere to a pacific course. The Montanists were spared, and allowed to carry on their mission. The hierarchical party was not, however, so easily disarmed. The contest was quickly revived. Tertullian fanned the flame during his sojourn in Rome. He arrived in that city at a critical moment, when the episcopal party was preparing its gravest usurpations under Bishop Zephyrinus.

Of this crisis we are able to give an exact account from some new documents, which have supplied us, as it were, with the details of the battle, of which, for a long while, only the final issues were known. The discovery of the "Philosophoumena" of Hippolytus has thrown much light on the fierce struggle for the power of the episcopate, carried on in the capital of the empire. The visit of Tertullian to Rome forms an important era in this struggle. The circumstances which led him there, the contest in which he took part, the grave consequences of his intervention—all are of moment in this critical hour. After the journey of Irenæus and his pacific mission, Montanism had continued to develop in the Church of Rome, without becoming declared schism, though it ceased not to propagate schismatic views. It is evident that a rupture was inevitable. Irenæus himself, better instructed as to the nature of teaching which was in flagrant opposition to his own conceptions of the episcopate, had disavowed and refuted it in his great work on

* Eusebius, "H. E." v. 4.

heresies. The official condemnation was, however, still wanting. The question had been left undecided. It was under Bishop Victor, the successor of Eleutherus (185–197), that this prolonged hesitation was brought to an end. Even then it needed the intervention of a heretic of Asia Minor, the Unitarian Praxeas, whose heresy was not at first discovered by the Christians of Rome, who were little versed in the deep things of theology, and liable to grave misconceptions in the domain of thought. Praxeas was the sworn enemy of Montanism, objecting vehemently to its Trinitarian teaching.* The disciples of Montanus insisted with peculiar emphasis on the distinction of the Divine Persons, in order to exalt as much as possible the Paraclete, and through Him the continuous inspiration, of which they regarded themselves as the representatives. Praxeas obtained their formal excommunication from Bishop Victor, and with all the more ease because Caïus, a teacher venerated throughout the West, had sharply attacked the millenarian ideas of Montanism. He would not have succeeded so easily if the Bishop of Rome, an avowed partisan of the hierarchy, and much disposed to sustain its most extravagant pretensions, had not found in this condemnation the opportunity of striking a blow at a party which had strongly opposed him on ecclesiastical questions.†

Tertullian, although already strongly inclined to Montanist severity, had not yet actually joined the

* See "Early Years of Christianity," vol. iii. "Heresy and Christian Doctrine," 139–141.

† "Idem hinc episcopum Romanum, agnoscentem jam prophetias Montani, coegit et literas pacis revocare jam emissas." Tertullian, "Adv. Prax." 1.

sect; or, rather, as Montanism was not yet organised as a schism in the West, there had been no occasion for the fiery Carthaginian to break with the Church. When he learned that a notorious heretic like Praxeas had obtained the condemnation of austere men, who seemed to him as the very salt of the earth and of the Church, he could contain himself no longer. He arrived in Rome overflowing with indignation, and engaged the clergy of the city in passionate polemics, the effect of which was to gather around him those whom Bishop Victor had excommunicated. The theological question became confounded with the question of discipline; it was at once the liberty and the holiness of the Church which Tertullian defended with all the zeal and vehemence of his nature, as may be clearly seen from his treatise, "De Pudicitia," which bears the glowing impress of these hot disputes. It is true that the state in which Tertullian found the Church of Rome was well fitted to exasperate him. Here the testimony of Hippolytus is of great value, for it fills a gap in the history of this period, so important to the Church of Rome.*

Bishop Victor had been succeeded in the year 197 by Zephyrinus, an ignorant man, little versed in ecclesiastical matters, and even accused of an immoderate love of money. He was an indifferent priest, well fitted to become the tool of an intriguer. He had fallen entirely under the influence of Callisthus. This

* The principal authority for this crisis in the Church of Rome is the "Philosophoumena" of Hippolytus, the genuineness of which we have established by discussing all hypotheses to the contrary. The literature of the subject will be found in Note C. p. 672, "Early Years of Christianity," vol. ii. "Martyrs and Apologists." We quote from the excellent edition, with commentary, of Dunker and Schneidewin, Göttingen, 1859.

man, though banished to the country by Victor, there to bury in oblivion a dishonourable past, had succeeded by his artifices in gaining the good will of the new bishop. He had won him over to his own peculiar views, and was actually governing under his name.* Callisthus was the *maire du palais* of this *fainéant* king. We do not deny that the biographer of Callisthus may have deepened the colouring in narrating the story of the youth of the former slave, who had become, in his eyes, the corrupter of the Church. Nevertheless, Hippolytus cannot be accused of calumny. The two parts of the life of Callisthus harmonise perfectly. We know that he began by showing himself an unfaithful steward to his master Carpophorus, who kept a sort of bank, and that in order to escape from the recriminations of the unhappy people whom he had defrauded, he repaired to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, to make a loud profession of Christianity. He thus succeeded in getting himself exiled to Sardinia as a confessor, instead of being sent to the mines as a rogue. By dint of importunity he contrived to secure for himself a place in the amnesty which Marcia, the mistress of Commodus, who was well disposed towards the new religion, obtained for a certain number of Christian exiles. Bishop Victor was not to be deceived, and he banished the pretended martyr from Rome. These shameful antecedents must have been somewhat obliterated before Zephyrinus would have dared to have Callisthus about him, and to give him a post of honour

* Τὸν Ζεφυρῖνον, ἄνδρα ἰδιώτην καὶ ἀγράμματον καὶ ἄπειρον τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν ὁρων. . . ἦγεν εἰς ὃ ἐβούλετο, ὄντα δωρολήπτην καὶ φιλάργυρον. "Phil." ix. 11.

and trust in the great Church of which he was the nominal head. Having once attained this important position, Callisthus had but one end in view—to become bishop himself, and to aggrandise for his own advantage the episcopal power. Hence his flatteries of all those who might aid him in his design, and his advances to heretics who were half Pantheists, like Cleomenes, Noëtus, or Sabellius.* If we seek an explanation of the favour he showed them, we shall soon discover that it is to be found not so much in the boldness of their speculations as in their declared hostility to Montanism, which they opposed on much the same grounds as Praxeas. Now Montanism was the inveterate enemy of the hierarchy, the Mordecai covered with ashes, protesting on the very threshold of the Church against the usurpations of the episcopate; the solemn preacher of repentance, demanding holiness as the one basis of the liberty of the people of God. Vainly it had been condemned; the blow aimed at it was very recent; the sympathies of austere Christians were with it still. Callisthus sought everywhere allies against the Montanist tendency, with the one design of establishing in opposition to it the episcopal sovereignty. We find him, in fact, at this period urging on Zephyrinus to issue a decree which conferred on the bishops the right of remitting sins in virtue of their office.

Tertullian arrived in Rome on the eve of the promulgation of this decree, when it formed the subject of discussion on every hand. St. Jerome states that he

* See the full details of this narrative, with the quotations, in "Early Years of Christianity," ii. 320–395; also iii. "Heresy and Christian Doctrine," 142–148.

entered into a violent controversy with the elders of the Church of Rome.* It is certain that the wily Callisthus was at the head of the hierarchical party; it was then with him that Tertullian had to contend in the foremost rank. We can well conceive what would be his line of argument. It bore at once upon the question of doctrine and of discipline. Finding the ideas of Praxeas, which he had thought finally condemned, current in high places, and assuming new and more daring forms, he opposed to them his theology, already deeply tinged with Montanism. We know that he carried the distinction of persons in the Godhead so far as to assert the absolute subordination of the Son to the Father. Upon the question of discipline, he directed his vehement eloquence against the usurpation meditated by the Church of Rome for the benefit of the episcopate. His treatise, "De Pudicitia," written at a later date, recalls the powerful arguments used by him at this time to frustrate so audacious an attempt.

We must note the presence of two distinct elements in Tertullian's polemics. He is right in opposing the new pretensions of the episcopate to a monopoly of the power of the keys, but to this innovation he opposes another, which is an exaggeration in the opposite direction: he absolutely refuses to sanction a second public repentance after baptism, especially in cases of incontinence. He adopts fully and without modification on this point, the implacable discipline of Montanism, and he thus weakens his righteous resistance to the

* "Hic cum usque ad mediam ætatem presbyter ecclesiæ permansisset, invidia postea et contumeliis clericorum Romanæ ecclesiæ, ad Montani dogma delapsus." Hyeron. "De viris illustribus," 53.

encroachments of the hierarchical party. Tertullian overwhelmed his opponents with a torrent of impetuous eloquence, which bore along many a sophism in its turbid waters. He carried to an extreme length the distinction between venial and mortal sins, recognising no restoration on this side the grave for sinners of the latter class.* The Church until now had refused restoration to apostates and murderers. Tertullian sought to establish that adultery deserved no greater indulgence. He drew a fearful picture of it, as occupying the middle place between idolatry and murder. Idolatry prepares the way for it, in its impure sanctuaries and under the shade of groves where it intoxicates the soul with its draughts of debasing pleasures. Murder marches after it, for blood always follows close upon lust, sometimes to punish it, sometimes to obliterate its traces. What hatred does not incontinence kindle, and to what crimes does it not resort to hide its shame? Infanticide and abortion are its most frequent consequences.† Why should apostacy be so much more severely visited? Is it more culpable to deny the faith at the stake or in the circus, in face of terrible tortures, than to repudiate it in act, at the behest of siren pleasures?‡ Tertullian sets aside all the parables of mercy which might be adduced as arguments against his view, such as those of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, the Prodigal Son. He wrests Scripture, to extract from it the bitterness of an unsparing severity. The most positive texts carry no weight with him; § he disputes the restoration of the incestuous at Corinth, notwithstanding the evidence.‖ He appeals from the one

* Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," 2. † Ibid. 5.
‡ Ibid. 22. § Ibid. 7–10. ‖ Ibid. 13.

passage to the general tone of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, "written not with ink, but with gall, and glowing throughout with the fire of an avenging wrath." * He well-nigh makes St. John and St. Paul pitiless sectaries, Montanists without bowels of compassion. If he spoke in this tone at Rome — and he would not be likely to moderate his language in the excitement of the contest — he must have singularly injured his own cause, and provoked a reaction not only against its errors, but against the aspect of truth he was defending. And yet this was a very important one, and, presented with more moderation, it might have delayed the triumph of the hierarchical party.

Tertullian vehemently opposes the attempt of the clergy to seize the power of the keys. If he will not recognise a second repentance, he at least makes a difference between the ancient practice of the Church and the innovation now proposed. Up to this time, the penitent had been accustomed to give expression to his feelings before the entire Church, and in its presence to shed the penitential tear. It was to the Church that his public confession was made, and the entire Church at once witnessed his sorrow and gave the sanction for his restoration. All this is changed if the absolution is to be pronounced by one man, under pretext that he holds an ecclesiastical office. Tertullian absolutely repudiates this claim. "God alone," he says, "can pardon sins, and He may pardon even the mortal sins which have been committed against Him." †

* "Animadvertamus totam epistolam primam, ut ita dixerim, non atramento sed felle conscriptam, tumentem, indignantem, invidiosam." Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," 14.

† "Quis dimittit delicta, ni solus Deus, et utique mortalia quæ in ipsum fuerint admissa?" Ibid. 21.

Where there is direct revelation and supernatural manifestation of His will, we may admit the possibility of this pardon even for sins for which there is no remission upon earth. This right belonged to the apostles, because the whole of their mission was miraculous. Where are the dead whom the bishops of this age have raised? Where are the wonders wrought by them? We may believe the same right of absolving to have been possessed by the holy prophets, whose lips the Spirit had touched with His live coal from the altar. When the Spirit speaks directly in the Holy Church by a supernatural inspiration, all ordinary rules give way.* But how can miraculous restoration affect the general order of the Church? Any conclusion derived from it can apply only in cases where there is clear evidence of miraculous power or of the prophetic spirit.

Tertullian treats with much vigour the argument which seems already to have been derived at Rome from the words of Jesus Christ to Peter—"Upon this rock I will build my church, and I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." He maintains that this declaration refers exclusively to Peter himself, and does not confer on him any power which could be transmissible. The great apostle who had brought into the kingdom of God the three thousand Jews assembled on the day of Pentecost, had in truth opened to them the gate of heaven. When he pronounced swift judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira, he used his awful power to bind, as he used his power to loose, when he exempted the proselytes of the Gentiles from subjection to all the rites of the synagogue. "But these

* Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," 21.

prerogatives were his by a special and incommunicable gift of God.* Moreover, where, we ask, do we find adulterers restored by him? In a word, the Church, as ordinarily constituted, possesses none of those great prerogatives which are based alone upon miracles or inspiration. "Show me," says Tertullian, to the bishop of his day," "show me the signs by which I may know thee as an apostle or prophet, and then I will recognise in thee the organ of the Godhead, and thou mayest claim the right to remit even mortal sins. But if to thee is committed only the care of the discipline of the Church, if thou art called not to rule but to serve, who art thou, to grant such indulgence? Being neither prophet nor apostle, thou lackest the virtue which would render thee capable of granting such pardons."† Tertullian protests against the facile morality which would result from the relaxation of discipline. Using a lively figure, he compares the casuist who seeks an impossible equilibrium between the flesh and the spirit, to a dancer who trys to walk between two abysses upon a tight rope. Such a moralist is, to use his bold expression, "the rope-dancer of modesty and chastity."‡ Tertullian sums up his arguments in these words, which strike at the heart of the pretensions against which he is animadverting: "To pardon is the right of the Lord and Master, not of the servant; the right of God, and not of the priest."§

We can understand what a storm of passion and anger would be aroused by words like these, falling

* "Domini intentionem hoc personaliter Petro conferentem." Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," 21. † Ibid. 21.

‡ "Age, tu funambule pudicitiæ et castitatis." Ibid. 10.

§ "Domini enim, non famuli est jus et arbitrium; Dei ipsius, non sacerdotis." Ibid. 21.

like a thunderclap in an atmosphere already heavily charged with conflicting elements. The rigid school of moralists were as much elated on their side, as many Christian souls were wounded by this pitiless doctrine and discipline, which would obliterate some of the most touching pages of the gospel, and put into the hands of the Good Shepherd a rod of iron, instead of the crook which gathers in the wanderers. Tertullian thus unwittingly strengthened the hands of his opponents. It was after his departure from Rome, when he had shaken off the dust from his feet upon the great Church, which he regarded as fallen from the faith, that Zephyrinus sanctioned by a formal decree the right of the bishop to pardon, by virtue of his priestly authority, sins declared mortal, such as adultery and incontinence. Tertullian calls him with bitter irony the bishop of bishops, little dreaming that this appellation will shortly be a reality, and crown a long series of usurpations."* With impassioned eloquence he asks him where he will place this too famous decree. "Shall it be over the doorway of places of infamy, beneath their vile advertisements? A repentance so contemptible should be proclaimed in the very places where vice renders it necessary. The assurance of pardon should be there, to be read by those who enter in the hope of obtaining it. But no! it is to the door of the Church that a promise like this is affixed, and they say that the Church is a virgin! Far, far from thee, spouse of Christ, be so shameless a proclamation!"†

* "Maximus episcopus episcoporum edicit. Ego et mechiæ et fornicationis delicta pœnitentia functis dimitto." Tertullian, "De Pudicitia," I.

† "Et ubi proponetur liberalitas ista. Ibidem, opinor, in ipsis libidinum januis. Sed hoc in ecclesia legitur et virgo est!" Ibid. I.

It does not seem that the hierarchical party was satisfied even with its triumph under Zephyrinus, for under his successor, who faithfully carried out his policy, the decree, so violently incriminated by Tertullian, was promulgated a second time, or at least confirmed. The hierarchical party felt this step to be necessary when it found itself confronted with a new opposition, all the more formidable that it was temperate, and could not be accused schism.

Let us trace the circumstances which led to this second conflict. Callisthus had attained his ends at the death of Zephyrinus. By dint of craft, flattery, and cunning artifice, he had gathered a sufficient number of adherents to secure his election to the bishopric (211–223). That one formerly a slave should be able to attain to this high dignity, appears to us admirable, and in beautiful accordance with that perfect equality, from a religious point of view, of all men in Christ, which St. Paul proclaimed when he said, "In him there is neither bond nor free." Unhappily, this slave had brought with him into the Church the Spirit of intrigue of the freedmen of the Roman nobility. After a dishonourable youth, the memory of which was no doubt effaced, we have seen him flattering the heretics from the East until they were unmasked, and seeking among these men, whose peculiar tenets made Montanism very obnoxious to them, a rallying point from which to attack those stern opponents of the hierarchy. Having gained the bishopric, Callisthus cast off his inconvenient allies, and excommunicated Sabellius, his former friend. He was more or less compelled to this act in spite of the carresses he had lavished upon

Sabellius, by the energetic attitude taken by one of the elders of the Church of Rome, who was no other than Hippolytus, subsequently bishop of Ostia. This was an adversary not to be despised. His reputation was great. He belonged to the race of the illustrious apologists of Alexandria, and was versed in all science and philosophy. The conclusion of his book on heresies is written in a style of simple and grand oratory, which proves him to have had the gift of eloquent speech. He belonged to the austere party, without falling into the exaggerations of Montanism, which he had opposed in common with Caïus, another doctor of this same Roman Church, who had specially set himself to discredit the visions of the pretended prophets. Hippolytus undoubtedly fell into exaggeration on the subject of Christian asceticism:* he was opposed to the marriage of the clergy after entering on their office. He did not, however, agree with the severity of the followers of Montanus in refusing to sinners the possibility of restoration. For a long time he had resisted Zephyrinus and Callisthus, more than once compelling the latter to draw back. It was by his keen polemics against those subtle supporters of the hierarchy with whom Callisthus had made an alliance, that the new bishop was constrained to return, at least in appearance, to orthodoxy. The battle was to be renewed with added vehemence on the domain of Church government. Callisthus was obliged to spare those

* Döllinger, who admits the genuineness of the "Philosophoumena," has attempted to represent Hippolytus as a Novatian by anticipation, a pure schismatic, who was banished to Ostia to put an end to the violent agitations he aroused. But these are simply mistaken attempts to justify Callisthus. See "Hippolytus and Callisthus," by Döllinger. Regensburg, 1853.

who had raised him to power. The more unfit he was for his high position, the more dependent was he on those by whom it had been secured for him. He was bound to repay their service to him by compliances of every kind. He appears to have shown especial consideration for two classes of persons—the members of his clergy and distinguished ladies. The latter often contracted irregular unions with men of the lower class, or even with slaves. Callisthus closed his eyes to these grave irregularities, as to many others.* Taking his stand upon the decree of Zephyrinus, he declared that he had the necessary authority for pardoning all manner of sins.† Thus the usurpation of his predecessor was confirmed. It augmented the episcopal authority on two important points: first, the right of pardoning sins was henceforth devolved on the bishop personally; next, this right was under no limitations, as heretofore, and extended to all manner of sins. The new priesthood established upon these bases, was a far more privileged order than the old, which had been content with offering expiatory sacrifices without making any claim to be itself the guardian and dispenser of the pardons of God.

Callisthus further strengthened the hands of the priesthood in another way. Compelled to show indulgence towards his clergy, he waived all the rules which

* "Phil." ix. 12, p. 461.

† Πρῶτος τὰ πρὸς τὰς ἡδονὰς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συγχωρεῖν ἐπενόησε, λέγων πᾶσιν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἀφίεσθαι ἁμαρτίας. Ibid. ix. 12, p. 458. Hippolytus seems to attribute to Callisthus the first uttering of this decree, but Tertullian speaks of a similar decree, passed at the time of his visit to Rome, while Zephyrinus was bishop. It is possible that Callisthus may have given wider extension to the earlier decree, of which, moreover, he was virtually the author.

had till then been imposed on candidates for the ecclesiastical office. Second, and even third marriages no longer formed any obstacle to consecration.* His decree making the office of bishop irrevocable is of far graver moment. It contained the principle that a bishop should not be deposed, even if he had committed a mortal sin.† Callisthus in this way dissevered the office from all dependence on moral qualities; holiness sank into insignificance in comparison with canonical appointment. While Montanism, on the one hand, reduced official position to the lowest possible value, Callisthus, on the other hand, made it the one essential. He was logically right as an advocate of the hierarchical principle; for when it is once admitted that spiritual competency is of more importance than any dignity conferred by place, the door is at once opened for the restoration of the universal priesthood, on a basis of common holiness of life, since holiness is not the monopoly of any one class of Christians, nor is it conferred by any mode of official consecration.

Callisthus was not content with passing these noxious measures; he vindicated them in theory. The true founder of Churches whose doors stand open to receive unconverted multitudes, he appealed to the parable of the Tares and the Wheat, as teaching that all severe discipline is adjourned to the day of final judgment. He is the inventor of the famous comparison of the Church to Noah's ark, into which entered alike the clean and unclean beasts.‡ He drew the

* "Phil." ix. 12, p. 459.

† Οὗτος ἐδογμάτισεν ὅπως εἰ ἐπίσκοπος ἁμάρτοι τι, εἰ καὶ πρὸς θάνατον, μὴ δεῖν κατατίθεσθαι. Ibid. ix. 12.

‡ Τὴν κιβωτὸν τοῦ Νῶε εἰς ὁμοίωμα ἐκκλησίας ἔφη γεγονέναι. Ibid. ix. 12.

conclusion that the most important question concerning this great vessel the Church, which carried so mixed a company on board, was, Who was the pilot? Ecclesiastical authority gained by all that was lost of individual holiness. It was in this way that this crafty intriguer, this magician, as Hippolytus calls him, effected one of the greatest revolutions in the Christian community. The power of the keys, after having been grasped by feeble or withered hands, was to pass to heroic bishops like Stephen, and to be purified by the blood of the martyrs in the second half of the third century. It is possible that Callisthus himself may have had the signal honour of perishing as a confessor. He certainly did not deserve it, although we can imagine that the glorious martyr-fires may have had a purifying effect even upon him. If this was so, we can understand how the latest memory of his life may have so long sufficed to cover all the rest.

The triumph of the hierarchical party at this period is attested in the most impersonal document that can well be imagined. The pontifical book, which records, with the names of the bishops, the various changes of ritual, states that in the time of Zephyrinus and Callisthus, the Christian people had no longer the right to lay the oblation of bread and wine upon the Eucharistic table, but were bound to pass them through the hands of the deacons and elders. The very worship thus bore the impress of the revolution wrought in favour of episcopal and sacerdotal views.

Hippolytus does not tell us what was the effect of his opposition upon the Church of Rome. We know that that opposition was not lacking in vigour or vehe-

mence, for he does not hesitate even to use invective. That which is certain is, that in spite of his high intellectual superiority, he was vanquished, as the Montanists had been, and probably partly by reason of the very exaggeration to which we have alluded. The episcopate was established in Rome in the year 236, with a priestly and irrevocable character. It assumed the rule over a Church which bowed willingly under a lenient hand, and consented to raise high the episcopal chair, on condition that discipline was proportionately lowered. Happily, persecution was about again to pass through its crucible this corrupted Christianity, and to add great and glorious pages to the history of the Church of Rome.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL CRISIS IN THE TIME OF CYPRIAN. 248–264.*

THE great advantages gained in Rome by the hierarchical party were confirmed and augmented at Carthage in the following period by the wide influence of one of the greatest bishops the Church ever possessed. In fact, they may be said never to have received their true sanction till the policy of intrigue by which they had been won had been succeeded by a governing power actuated by higher aims. Between Callisthus and Cyprian the difference was vast. The bishop of Carthage purified by the fire of his zeal a power obtained by well-nigh criminal procedures; but while he purified, he was no less anxious to preserve, and even to augment it, under a sincere conviction of right, and in pursuit of a noble end. One of the secrets of his success was that he knew when to pause, and would not go beyond the spirit of his age in the attempt at excessive centralisation, which the Church of Rome was ever eager to urge.

* Neander has given an excellent account of the ecclesiastical crisis in Carthage. "Allgemeine Geschichte der Christlich. Religion," vol. i. 3rd edit. See also Ritschl's work already quoted, pp. 555–574. The chief authority is the collection of letters by St. Cyprian, who governed his Church from his place of retreat during the persecution.

After the death of Hippolytus, the contest between the two parties who had divided the Church passed from Rome to Carthage, presently to return again to Rome, and finally reach its climax there in the establishment of the episcopal power under highly favouring circumstances. The severe and antihierarchical party showed itself far less schismatic at first in proconsular Africa than in Italy. Thus it aroused a more moderate opposition, and was able to hold its ground for some time, even among a portion of the clergy. Felicitas and Perpetua, who were among the most glorious heroines of the persecution, evidently belonged to this school, as is shown by the vision approvingly recorded by the unknown author of the acts of their martyrdom. He places them in the ranks of the women honoured by the inspiration of the Paraclete. In one of their holy ecstasies, Bishop Opatus and the priest Aspasius appear to them, the one on the right, the other on the left, of the heavenly gates. They bear on their features a look of sadness, because they are divided in opinion. They ask the martyrs to reconcile them. The subject of their difference is made very clear by the words addressed to the bishop by the confessors: they reproach him with having a flock which seems to have come from the circus and its profane spectacles. As no blame is cast upon Aspasius, we may infer that the dispute between the bishop and the elder was on the subject of discipline. The austere school, no doubt, regarded the bishop as too indulgent to the facility with which the Christians of Carthage mixed in the pagan life of the city. It is clear that Felicitas and Perpetua inclined to the side of severity. It follows

that, as early as the year 202, the Montanist party had adherents among the confessors and in the clergy of the Church. Tertullian belonged to that party long before his declared rupture with the Church of Rome, for his early writings have a very decided tone of asceticism. We know with what sharpness and vigorous eloquence he defended Montanism in his later treatises. It does not appear, however, that there was any marked line of separation between the austere party and the Church. The treatise, "De Virgin. Velandis," contains an indistinct allusion to the beginning of a rupture, in consequence of the sort of constraint that was exercised over young Montanist women, in compelling them to appear with uncovered face in the holy assemblies.* This vague allusion does not, however, warrant us in supposing that the separation was absolute. The schism must in any case have been of short duration, for on the death of Tertullian all parties concurred in paying profound respect to the memory of one whom they justly regarded as the glory of the African Church. His ideas naturally gained increased currency through this admiration for their author—a feeling in which Cyprian entirely concurred. We know, further, that Montanism had yet other adherents in the Eastern episcopate.

It is certain that the anti-episcopal party did not cease to be represented among the clergy of Carthage. Judging from its attitude towards Cyprian in the persecution under the Emperor Decius, it seems to have laid aside for the time its excessive severity, which it had had no occasion to exercise during the long years

* Tertullian, "De Virgin. Velandis," 3.

of peace which the Church had enjoyed. It was more concerned for the liberty of the Church than for its discipline, and its chief anxiety was to guard, as far as possible, its ancient rights from the encroachments of the episcopate. We shall find it subsequently returning to its traditions of extreme severity, and renewing the controversies of the preceding period. This party could not contend victoriously with such a bishop as Cyprian. He was the ideal personification of the hierarchical party in this phase of its development, as Irenæus had been in the second half of the second century. We need not recur to the circumstances of his life. We know him already—the grand, strong-minded, upright Christian man, with a heart full of love for his flock, especially when it is scattered and in danger, and with an iron will. In him prudence is joined to valour, and he regards his authority as a sacred trust, which he is as much bound to defend against the schismatics as he is bound and ready to defend his own faith at the bar of the proconsular tribunal. He is not moved by any petty ambition; he regards himself as the sentinel set to guard a post of honour and peril that must be kept for the defence of the most precious possession of the Church. If he speaks loftily, it is because he is really raised to a great moral height by the greatness of the danger and the duty. It cannot be denied, however, that the high tone of this militant leader does often verge on arrogance when he throws himself into the heat of the conflict. Strange to say, this Cyprian, the sworn adversary of the lawless mysticism of the Montanists, the man of systematic order, has also his visions and hours of ecstasy. He appeals to these as revelations. It is true

that they are only the consecration of his own favourite notions. Thus he hears a voice from heaven saying to him, "He who believes not on Christ when He makes a bishop, will be forced to believe on Him when He will avenge His priest."* When, in order to attest his humility, Cyprian invokes the universal testimony which is rendered to him, he gives an equivocal proof of the virtue itself.† He has provoked, by expressions like this, the contrast which his adversaries have drawn between his conduct and the example of Christ and His apostles. It would, nevertheless, be unjust to suppose that pride of office was the principal motive of the course he pursued. While we see in him that admixture of human passions which the holiest do not altogether escape, we must bear in mind the pure devotedness of his life.

§ 1.—*First Phase of the Conflict during the Persecution under Decius.*

From his entrance on his office Cyprian encountered lively oppósition from the clergy of Carthage. It will be remembered that it was only two years after his baptism (248) that he was raised to the bishopric by a sort of popular acclamation. This rapid elevation was contested. It was probably not so much the manner in which he had been chosen as the opinions he was known to hold which aroused this opposition. The divisions which we have noted in the Church of Carthage, in the time of Perpetua and Felicitas, continued to exist there as in most of the other Churches. It was easy to find a pretext to widen the breach.

* "Qui Christo non credit sacerdotem facienti postea credere incipiet sacerdotem vindicanti." Cyprian, "Ep." 66, 10. My quotations are made from the "Tauchnitz edition," Liepzig, 1838. † Ibid. 66, 3.

Five elders or priests—for priestly notions had made sufficient progress by this time for the latter term to be used by preference—protested against the election of Cyprian, and raised a determined opposition.* At their head was Novatus. Cyprian loads Novatus with the gravest charges. He accuses him of having allowed his father to die of famine in some obscure quarter, of having hastened the death of his wife by violence, and of scandalising the Church in various other ways.† It is difficult to know how much there is of truth and how much of malignity in this picture of a sworn enemy. Evidently these crimes of blood were not proved when Novatus placed himself at the head of the opposition to Cyprian, else his mouth would have been immediately closed, and his deposition would have put an end to the contest. Leaving this question undecided, we may still gather from the invectives of Cyprian, that Novatus was a man of ardent, impetuous temperament, accustomed to oppose the bishops, and ill regarded by most of them—a decided and vehement foe to the episcopal party. "He was," says Cyprian, "a torch kindled to light the fire of sedition, a whirlwind, a tempest, the enemy of repose and of peace." ‡ Cyprian does not accuse Novatus of any heresy; the quarrel between them was purely on ecclesiastical questions.

It appears probable that the five opposing priests

* "Hoc quorundam presbyterorum malignitas et perfidia perfecit, dum conjurationis suæ memores et antiqua illa contra episcopatum meum, imo contra suffragium vestrum venena retinentes, instaurant veterem contra nos impugnationem suam." Cyprian, "Ep." 43, 1. "Eadem rursus eversio per quinque presbyteros." Ibid. 3.

† Ibid. 52, 2. Novatus is named in company with three of the opposing priests. Ibid. 14, 4. ‡ "Fax et ignis, turbo et tempestas." Ibid. 32, 2.

sought to turn to account the somewhat hasty election of the new bishop, in order to claim more independence in the parishes, at the head of which they were placed, under the title of elders or priests. We learn that the point in dispute, in this first stage of the struggle, was the measure of liberty to be enjoyed by the priests in relation to their bishop. This appears from an incident which occurred to renew the opposition when it appeared to have been subdued by the forbearance of Cyprian, who had allowed the recalcitrants to continue in their office, and had taken no severe measures against them. Novatus raised to the diaconate one of his warmest partisans, Felicissimus, without informing his bishop, and consequently without his authorisation.* This was a bold assertion of parochial independence; it was, in fact, affirming that each parish, by its internal organisation, could govern itself, and that the priest was bishop in his community, and competent to decide on all questions not affecting the interests of the Church at large. This was a perfectly legitimate view of the ancient constitution of the Church, when the equality of bishops and elders was universally accepted. In such a condition of things, the elder who had been entrusted with the direction of a Church had no occasion to seek the authorisation of one of his colleagues for the election of a deacon: they were equals, and neither under the sanction of the other. Novatus, in choosing a deacon on his own responsibility, reverted to the ancient right of the Church, and thus protested against the great revolution which had been wrought.

* "Ipse est qui Felicissimum satellitum suum diaconum, nec permittente me nec sciente, constituit." Cyprian, "Ep." 52, 2.

Evidently this proceeding was in accordance with all his previous conduct, and with that of his four colleagues, who had opposed Cyprian from the time of his election. The bishop was indignant at this daring independence, which militated against his cherished notions, for he desired to possess the respect of the hierarchy of all grades. He did not, however, nullify the election of Felicissimus, because however much he might regret such a nomination, made without his concurrence, he was not in a position to treat it as absolutely culpable and irregular. The latest assumptions of episcopal authority had not yet received official sanction; the Church was governed much more by the law of custom than by written law.

The dissensions in the Church were gravely aggravated at the close of the terrible persecution raised by Decius in 247, when the question of discipline arose. The Church, more or less enervated during a long period of calm, found herself suddenly plunged into fiery trials. In the innumerable defections which followed, we see how much the Church had lost in living piety, by the increase of the hierarchical element. Christians cannot be released with impunity from any part of their personal responsibility, and great moral damage is done when submission to a priest is made to take precedence of holiness towards God. The few Christians who continued faithful in view of tortures and dungeons, in which a lingering death awaited them, received the greater honour in proportion to the unfaithfulness of the many. Their heroism stood out in bold relief against the dark background of cowardice and apostasy. Those who denied the faith often

bitterly lamented their fall; they were then a prey to all the terrors of conscience, and came with groans and tears to the door of the Church, seeking the readmission which had hitherto been denied to sinners of so deep a dye. In fact, except in Rome during the episcopate of Callisthus, whose famous decree seems to have promised restoration to all manner of offenders, apostasy had been regarded as a crime inexpiable on this side the grave. The Christian who had burned incense to an idol was left to the mercy of God, but he could not take his place again among his brethren, and partake of the holy mysteries. Cyprian, before the persecution under Decius, had held on this point the same severe views as the early Church. He had written, in his treatise on "Testimonies," "The Church cannot restore one who has sinned against God Himself."* Now what can be a more direct offence against the Divine Majesty than the offering sacrifice to false gods?

The Bishop of Carthage had too much the heart of a father not to be touched with a tender and profound pity at the sight of those groaning multitudes who sought pardon with tears. "I suffer, O my brethren," he exclaims. "I suffer with you, and it is not sufficient consolation for me that I have not also fallen, for what does the shepherd feel so keenly as the harm that touches his flock? In my own breast I feel the sorrows of every one of you; I share in the anguish of your repentance; I weep with those who weep; I feel myself fallen with those who lie prostrate. My

* "Non posse in ecclesia remitti ei qui in Deum deliqueret." Cyprian, "Testim." iii. 28.

members are wounded by the shafts of the enemy; his sword has entered into mine own bowels in piercing theirs. My soul cannot believe in its own fidelity in this persecution. Love involves me in the fall of my brethren.*

With such feelings, Cyprian could not adhere to his former rigid views, but he retained so much as to prevent his being satisfied with an illusory repentance. He had decided, with great wisdom, that the question of the restoration of the faithless Christians should be left until peace had been restored to the Church, in order that examination into the several cases might be made by the bishop, assisted by his clergy, and thus hasty and injudicious steps might be avoided.†

The opposite party could not lose such an opportunity of opposing Cyprian. Already it had attempted to bring discredit upon his personal character, because he had evaded, by flight, the certainty of torture. It was difficult, however, to call in question his courage. His firmness was well known. For him it was the greater sacrifice not to court martyrdom; but he felt that duty commanded prudence for the sake of his Church, that he might conduct her safely through this critical period of her history. We owe it to Cyprian's retirement to a place of safety, that we possess that invaluable correspondence which enables us to follow closely all the phases of the great contest. He took no pains to offer any elaborate justification of himself; he affirmed that

* Cyprian, "De lapsis," 4.

† "Ante est, ut pacem a Domino mater ecclesia prior sumat, tunc de filiorum pace tractetur!" Cyprian, "Ep." 15, 2. "Cum persecutione finita convenire in unum cum clero et recolligi cœperimus." Ibid. 15, 1; Ibid. 17, 1.

he had obeyed the command of Jesus Christ, in fleeing before the advance of persecution.* The contest was resumed with unabated vigour upon the difficult question of the restoration of those who had denied the faith. The antiepiscopal party, preferring popularity to the extreme severity which was the tradition of the early Church, and to which it was soon to return, ranged itself against Cyprian on the side of indulgence. It achieved a master stroke of policy in enlisting the sympathies of the confessors who were in prison, and in persuading them to grant letters of grace to the repentant apostates. It is certain that the African martyrs yielded on this occasion to the schismatic influences which had been long at work in the great Church of Carthage; they placed their exalted position at the service of the opposing party, who flattered them in the most artful and extravagant manner. Cyprian broadly accuses the priests who had opposed him at the time of his entry on office, of having turned away the confessors from submission to their bishop, and having led them to break the rules of discipline.

This intervention of the antiepiscopal party in an affair so delicate shows us the full scope of the contest, and sets it in its true light. The question is twofold. First, it is simply one of discipline; it must be determined if the certificate of a martyr can validly dispense with all the rules of penitence. But the question soon opens to wider issues: that which is to be decided is, where resides the true and final authority in the Church. Is it always associated with the episcopate, or does a

* Cyprian, "Ep." 20, 1; Ibid. 14, 1.

pre-eminent degree of holiness constitute a yet higher power? Is the official priesthood bound to recognise another, more excellent though less regular, priesthood, that of martyrdom or of Christian heroism? If the confessor occupies a higher position than the bishop, then we set aside the special, and return to the universal priesthood; for the confession of the name of Christ in the arena or at the stake is not the privilege of a caste, an order, a clerical body. The blood-stained robe of the martyr invests the humblest and most ignorant with the same priestly and royal dignity as the most illustrious bishop. The hierarchy will receive a mortal wound if this supremacy of the martyrs is ever recognised in an ecclesiastical act. It was then the ecclesiastical order which Cyprian defended no less than the rules of discipline. He allowed no obscurity to remain on his views. He bitterly reproached his adversaries with wishing to dispense with bishops and priests in the restoration of the guilty, and thus aiming to destroy all sacerdotal authority.*

It must be admitted that resistance to the pretensions of the martyrs was very difficult, for they inspired unbounded enthusiasm: they were the idol of the Church, and it was not without danger that they breathed the incense of so much sincere adulation. Cyprian himself helped to exalt them. Thus, he uses most extravagant language in his letter to the confessors of Rome, whom he endeavoured to win over to his cause. He lauds, in unmeasured terms, their longsuffering in enduring hunger and thirst, and every description of torture; in bearing with equal fortitude the long winter cold and the burn-

* "Nec per episcopos et sacerdotes Domino satisfiat—omnis sacerdotalis auctoritas et potestas destruatur." Cyprian, "Ep." 43, 3.

ing heat of summer. Have they not been like grapes gathered from the Lord's vintage, and crushed by persecution as in a glorious winepress? Of what avail are his prayers on their behalf in comparison with those which arise from their dungeons? "You restore to us far more than we can give you," he says, "when you remember us before God; you who breathe no longer any but heavenly air, who have no thoughts but those which are divine; you whose prolonged sufferings raise you continually higher. It is time, O brethren beloved, that you should give me a place in your prayers. Your voices, ennobled and purified by confession, and rendered pleasing to God by your glorious perseverance, reach even to His seat. To you who have conquered the world, all the heights of heaven are freely open. It is yours to obtain from the Divine mercy all that you ask. Have you not, in truth, earned a right to receive all from that mercy—you who have kept the Commandments, you who are the true witnesses of the gospel, the true martyrs of Christ?"* Cyprian knows well that he is addressing confessors who have not tarnished their glory by rebelling against established order; but it is none the less true that, in ascribing to them merit and an exceptional power with God, he is sanctioning the boldest pretensions of their brethren at Carthage. These same confessors, whom he praises in such extravagant terms, allow themselves to be exalted by their peculiar position in the Church, even when they do not enter into conflict with its regular authorities. The letter of the Roman martyrs

* "Quod enim petitis de indulgentia Domini, quod non impetrare mereamini?" Cyprian, "Ep." 37, 4.

to Cyprian betrays a dangerous exaltation of mind. "Is there any glory more sublime," they write, "than to confess the name of Christ in face of the tormentors; to be associated in the passion of the Redeemer; and, at last, to sit down among the angels after being forsaken of men?"*

This highly-wrought condition of mind was fraught with peril to the less prudent among the confessors: they came to think of themselves as so identified with the sacrifice of Christ, that they imagined they held in their hands the key of pardon. They were besieged with petitions which were really prayers, as though they were the sovereign dispensers of Divine grace. One of these petitions has come down to us. It shows what superstitious confidence was placed in the martyrs. A Christian of Carthage named Celerinus had the grief of seeing his sister succumb in the persecution. He addresses himself with tears to Lucian, whom he regards as the head of the imprisoned confessors. He implores him to intercede with the first of their company who shall be led forth to death, that he will remit to his sister and to two other women the sin they have committed in yielding to the threats of the persecutors.† He pleads their cause with generous ardour; he pictures them going to meet the confessors who have been released from captivity, ministering to them, and lodging them under their own roof. Lucian's reply shows to what a degree these Christian captives had allowed themselves to be misled as to their dignity and power.

* "Quid gloriosus quam collegam passionis cum Christo factum fuisse?" Cyprian, "Ep." 31, 3.

† "Rogo, Domine, ut quicumque prior vestrum coronatus fuerit, istis sororibus nostris tale peccatum remittant." Ibid. 21, 3.

He writes to Celerinus: "When the blessed Paul was yet in the body, he called me, and said: Lucian, I tell thee before Christ, that if after my departure some one asks of thee the peace of the Church, thou shalt grant it to him in my name.* According to this command we have granted peace to all those who have sought it." Lucian therefore declares himself ready to accede to the request made to him, on condition that the bishop shall be informed, and the public repentance not neglected.

The confessors, obeying the instigations of Cyprian's enemies, signify to him in a tone of uncompromising arrogance that they intend to persevere in these errors. "Know," they write to him from their prison, "that we have granted peace to all those who have satisfied thee of their conduct since their denial, and we demand that thou notify this decision to the other bishops. We desire that thou mayest have peace with all the holy martyrs."† The concession which seems to be made in this supercilious letter was really null. The confessors restricted the right of the bishop to an inquiry into the conduct of the Christians since their fall, but they reserved to themselves the right of pardoning apostasy, and thus in all that was essential the restoration of the fallen was vested in them. It would have been impossible to make a more distinct claim to the power of the keys. This was directly to attack the latest conquest of the episcopate. Thus the contest revived the

* "Tibi dico ut si quis per arcessitionem meam abs te pacem petierit, da in nomine meo." Cyprian, "Ep." 22, 2.

† "Scias nos universis, de quibus apud te ratio constiterit, quid post commissum egerint, dedisse pacem, et hanc formam per te aliis episcopis innotescere voluimus. Optamus te cum sanctis martyribus pacem habere." Ibid. 23.

gravest question of ecclesiastical authority raised in the preceding period, and wounded the hierarchy in its most sensitive point.

For some time abuses went on multiplying. Certificates of restoration were granted by thousands. * They were given to entire families, with this formula: "Communion to such an one and his house." † The priests and deacons who were hostile to the bishop received to the Eucharist with open arms all who presented these certificates. ‡ The bearers indeed imperiously demanded readmission, and if they encountered any opposition, were prepared to make good their rights by force. § Cyprian showed great firmness in this crisis, rendered so dangerous for him by the intervention of the martyrs. He commenced by appealing directly to the martyrs themselves, using great caution in his mode of address. He sought to move them by persuasion, while testifying at the same time his admiration and esteem. "It is not all," he said, "to have heroically defended the faith; it is needful also to respect established order, as faithful soldiers, who know how to fight with courage, and at the same time to maintain discipline. We must consider the salvation of those whom it is thus pretended to restore, but who are really only driven to certain perdition by a new outrage against God. Such seeming kindness is in reality cruel, for it turns to the injury of the unhappy one whom it misleads. ‖ Cyprian protested with great force against the

* "Libellorum millia." Cyprian, "Ep." 20, 2.

† "Audio quibusdam sic libellos fieri, ut dicatur. Communicet ille cum suis." Ibid. 15, 4. ‡ Ibid. 15, 1.

§ "Ut pacem sibi a martyribus promissam extorquere violento impetu niterentur." Ibid. 20, 3. ‖ Ibid. 15, 1, 2.

assumption of pardoning sins in the name of a man, even if he were the most glorious of martyrs. This is to lose sight of the fact that it is not the martyrs who make the gospel, but the gospel which makes the martyrs, and that there is but one name given for the forgiveness of sins—the name of Jesus.*

After addressing the confessors, Cyprian turned to his own clergy. He reminded them at once of the rules of true penitence and of the rights of the episcopate. "What," he exclaims, "for far less grave offences, sinners observe the delays prescribed for repentance. They conform to the rules of discipline, they make a public confession, and do not partake of the holy communion till they have received the laying on of hands from the bishop and the priest. And now, in the midst of persecution, apostates are received to the Eucharist without the due forms of penitence, and without the laying on of hands by the bishop and clergy." †

Cyprian is not content with appealing to his clergy. He very skilfully brings the question before the Christian people generally. He declares he will do nothing without their support and sanction. ‡ He avows his love for his flock: it is because he is full of compassion for souls that he will not suffer undue haste in their restoration, lest they provoke the deeper wrath of God. Is it rational to launch upon the seas a leaky vessel before it is repaired? May not those priests and deacons justly be accused of unwarrantable conduct, who forget alike the interests of souls and the honour of the priesthood and the episcopal chair, while they pro-

* Cyprian; "Ep." 27, 3. † Ibid. 16, 2.

‡ "Nihil sine consilio vestro et sine consensu plebis mea privatim sententia gerere statuerim." Ibid. 14, 4.

ceed to hasty readmissions to the Church, contrary to all rules? * Thus the great bishop does not hesitate to seek support, against the extravagant pretensions of the confessors, in the popular assent, almost in the same way as royalty in the middle ages sought the alliance of the people against the assumptions of the feudal aristocracy. Cyprian seeks to reinforce his authority, as it were, at its source, and contrives to appear more jealous than his opponents for the rights of simple believers.

Lastly, not content with addressing himself to the martyrs of Carthage, to his clergy, and to his flock, he lays the whole question before the Church of Rome, not to obtain official decisions, of which he has no need, but to strengthen himself by the great influence of that Church throughout the West. He is not deterred by the fact that the Church is at this time passing through an interregnum on the eve of an episcopal election. The Roman clergy, even without a bishop, seem to him competent to pronounce a judgment, and he receives their full approbation. † He does not fail to appeal to the confessors who are in the prisons at Rome, ‡ and he has the good fortune to obtain from one of the latter explicit approval of his conduct. § He thus opposes confessors to confessors, as the surest means of triumphing over the resistance which is harassing him.

That nothing might be neglected, the Bishop of Carthage further appealed to the recreant Christians themselves, who were the cause of all this confusion. He demanded their prompt submission, and

* Cyprian, "Ep." 17, 1-3.
† Ibid. 20, 27.
‡ Ibid. 28.
§ Ibid. 30.

sharply reproached them with daring to place their demands under the name of the Church, as if the Church could be elsewhere than in the body of the faithful united to the bishop and his clergy; as if it had any other basis than the episcopate, which is the rock on which it rests. *

Hitherto Cyprian had shown as much wisdom as firmness in this difficult conflict. Nothing was more reasonable than to adjourn till peace was restored in the Church, the examination of the many cases of discipline which had arisen out of the persecution, and to oppose readmission on hasty and ill-considered grounds. It was with equal reason that the bishop made an exception in the case of the fallen Christians, who had had opportunity in the course of the persecution to perform acts of resistance to idolatry at the peril of their lives.† Cyprian acted inconsistently with the great principles so nobly developed by him in this grave crisis of his episcopate, when he admitted that in cases of mortal sickness the certificates of the martyrs might be substituted for the ordinary rules of discipline. ‡ We could well have understood his conduct, had he authorised his priests to give the communion to dying persons who showed sincere repentance, but why recognise this intervention of purely human merit or intercession? This was to concede the principle of the very error he had been opposing. It would thus seem that what he was supremely anxious to guard was his right as bishop,

* "Quando ecclesia in episcopo et clero et in omnibus stantibus sit constituta." Cyprian, "Ep." 33, 1. † Ibid. 25.

‡ "Occurrendum puto fratribus nostris, ut qui libellos a martyribus acceperunt et prærogativa eorum apud Deum adjuvari possunt, si incommodo aliquo et infirmitatis periculo occupati fuerint." Ibid. 18, 1.

and that any proceeding was regular to which his sanction had been given. This was a grievous inconsistency, fraught with grave perils for the future, for we know that the Church of the middle ages attributed to the glorified martyrs this dangerous prerogative of devolving their merits upon the unworthy, on condition that all was done under the sanction of the hierarchy.

§ 2.—*Second Phase of the Struggle after the Return of Cyprian to Carthage.*

Cyprian had held his ground on the question of the restoration of apostates. When he returned to Carthage, however, in 251, as soon as the persecution at all relaxed, he encountered an opposition more formidable than any in the past. Schism was on the eve of being declared. This new division was occasioned by a very wise decision of Cyprian. He had decreed that a visitation should be made in the various parishes of Carthage by two bishops and two elders, to inquire into the necessities of the poor, and confer as to the best means of succouring them; and also to ascertain in what condition matters really were after the stormy period through which the Church had lately passed. It was to be, in fact, a sort of ecclesiastical inspection. * Nothing could be more exasperating to the antiepiscopal party. It saw in this interference of Cyprian a flagrant usurpation, for it maintained the independence of the various parishes, which should not, in its view, be united by anything more than a federative bond. Felicissimus, whom Novatus had raised to the diaconate without the consent of Cyprian, and who appears

* "Cumque pro me vicarios miserim." Cyprian, "Ep." 41, 1.

to have obtained great influence in his Church, owing probably to its isolated position on a hill,* openly resisted his bishop. He separated himself from him, and threatened excommunication to any members of his flock who should not follow his example. He was supported by the priests of the party of opposition, who had never ceased to remain united in their schismatic tendencies. Cyprian replied by putting him out of the communion of the Church, and he was sustained in this decided measure by the bishops and priests to whom he had committed the inspection. War was declared anew between the two parties. No reconciliation was possible. One of the refractory priests, named Fortunatus, became the bishop of the opposition. † This party endeavoured to convoke a council, but they could only assemble a very insignificant number of bishops. ‡ Cyprian held at Carthage a great council of the bishops of Africa, in order to ratify the disciplinary measures determined on by him during the persecutions. He deferred the final resolution to a later examination, only because he was primarily anxious to obtain the confirmation of the excommunication he had pronounced upon Felicissimus and his partisans. § He received the entire adherence of his colleagues. The bishops of Italy held a similar council in Rome at the same period, and reached the same conclusions. ‖ Cyprian

* "Secum in monte." Cyprian, "Ep." 41, 2. There is no ground for writing *in monte.*

† "Fortunato pseudo episcopo a paucis et inveteratis hæreticis constituto." Cyprian, "Ep." 59, 11. ‡ Ibid. 59, 14.

§ "Auctoritas episcoporum in Africa constitutorum qui jam de illis judicaverunt et eorum conscientiam judicii sui nuper gravitate damnarant." Ibid. 59, 20.

‖ "Cumque semel placuerit tam nobis quam confessoribus et clericis urbicis, item universis episcopis vel in nostra provincia vel trans mare

held a second, a short time afterwards, in anticipation of another persecution. The decisions taken with regard to the fallen Christians who should give proof of repentance in the article of death, and those which were designed to render readmission to the Church more easy, where there was earnest penitence and firm resistance to the assaults of the enemy, were sanctioned without opposition.*

Peace seemed re-established in the Church of Carthage, but the conflict only broke forth afresh on a wider arena. Novatus repaired to Rome, with the firm intention of fomenting division there, and of finding allies in his determined resistance to his bishop.† This idea absorbed every other in his mind. This was soon made evident by his sudden change of opinion and tactics. After appearing as the advocate of excessive tolerance, in order to gain the adherence of the African martyrs, we find him seeking allies in Italy among men of the most opposite views; thus showing that he attached no real importance to the question of discipline, and that his one object was to secure a triumph over the episcopal power. The circumstances in which the Church of Rome was at this time placed were favourable to the projects of Novatus. Bishop Fabianus had suffered martyrdom in the year 250: his place was not yet filled. There might be hope of raising to the episcopal see of this great Church a representative of the party opposed to the hierarchy—a party which had never been completely vanquished in Rome.

constitutis ut nihil innoveretur circa lapsorum causam, nisi omnes in unum convenerimus." Cyprian, "Ep." 43, 2. * Ibid. 57, 1.

† "Novatus cum sua tempestate ad Romam navigans." Ibid. 52, 2.

The Montanist leaven diffused by St. Hippolytus was still working. The terrible persecution which had just swept over the Church had been favourable to it. Novatus did not hesitate an instant in attaching himself to the rigid disciplinarians, because in Rome their party alone offered active opposition to the hierarchy, which they regarded as the great enemy. This sudden change of tactics on the part of Novatus was not unattended with difficulty, for the Roman Christians, and especially the partisans of the liberties of the Church, had supported Cyprian in his treatment of the apostates. It could not be otherwise. At Rome resistance to the progress of the hierarchy had always been based upon disciplinary severity. Ecclesiastical liberalism had there been rather a means than an end, the principal end being the purity of the Church. From this point of view the liberals of Rome had been far more favourable to Cyprian than to his opponents, and had testified their approval to him in the most explicit manner. Novatus was therefore compelled to veer completely round, which he did with the less difficulty, since, while changing tactics, he still kept the same end in view.

The two parties which divided the Church of Rome had not renewed their quarrels since the death of Hippolytus. A common peril, if it had not reconciled, had at least pacified, especially during the period which followed the death of Fabianus. That spirit of union and concession, so necessary in the critical position of a Church left without a head under the fire of a terrible persecution, is manifested in a letter addressed by the Roman priests and deacons to the

Church of Carthage, at the very time when Cyprian must have fled before the proscription. We find in this document, written with the utmost simplicity, a tone of great earnestness, and a deep feeling of the responsibility of a clergy without a bishop at its head, and bound therefore to exercise a more scrupulous watchfulness over itself.* We recognise the Church of the catacombs in the pressing exhortations contained in this letter not to neglect the bodies of the martyrs.† The question of discipline is touched upon cautiously. On the one hand, the Roman clergy regards it as its duty to show the most compassionate care for the fallen Christians; ‡ on the other hand, it does not appear to sanction public and formal restoration to the Church: it leaves the apostates to the mercy of God, except where death is obviously at hand.§ Such a letter must clearly have been the result of mutual concessions, though its prevailing spirit is that of a reasonable leniency.

It was not possible that this harmony should long continue. The controversies raised at Carthage speedily found an echo in Rome. We have seen the confessors, when appealed to by Cyprian, giving him their adherence, and differing from their brethren in Africa by the severity of their views. The conflicting opinions of the two parties were brought into prominence by the election of the new bishop, which was the occasion of sharp competition. The candidate of the

* Cyprian, "Ep." 8, 1. † Ibid. 8, 3. ‡ Ibid. 8, 1.
§ "Si quo modo indulgentiam poterunt recipere ab eo qui potest præstare." Cyprian, "Ep." 8, 2. "Subdidimus, ut si, qui in hanc tentationem inciderunt, cæperint apprehendi infirmitate et agant pœnitentiam facti sui et desiderent communionem, utique subveniri iis debet." Ibid. 8, 3.

sterner school was an eminent priest of the Roman clergy, named Novatian. Grave charges were brought against this man by his enemies. His successful opponent, Bishop Cornelius, circulated the report that he had been afflicted in his youth with one of those mysterious maladies which were supposed to indicate demoniacal possession.* The unknown exorcist to whom he owed his deliverance is said to have baptized him on his sick bed, which, it was supposed, would speedily prove the bed of death; and he thus never received the laying on of hands from the bishop. It was inferred that his nomination to the priesthood would be irregular. Cornelius further reproaches him with having fled away from danger and from duty during the days of persecution, and persisting in remaining in his place of safety in spite of the entreaties of the deacons of the Church.† Cyprian perhaps gives us the true version of this accusation, when he speaks of him as a Christian stoic,‡ from which we may suppose that he was living an ascetic, perhaps almost a hermit life, after the rude shocks to his nature which had given rise to the rumour that he was possessed. Perhaps, also, he may have already had scruples as to the laxity with which the communion was given to the dying, and was not disposed, as a priest, to encourage these practices, though not prepared to break openly with the Church. We can place no reliance on these portraits of the great schismatics, drawn by their enemies. The portrait of Cornelius, by Novatian, would probably not be much more faithful.

* Βοηθούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν ἐποροκιστῶν. Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 43.

† Παρακαλούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν διακόνων ἵν' ἐξελθὼν τοῦ οἰκίστου ἐν ᾧ καθεῖρξεν ἀπέσχε τοῦ πειθαρχῆσαι τοῖς διακόνοις. Ibid. vi. 43.

‡ Cyprian, "Ep." 55, 13.

It is beyond question that Novatian was a man eminent for intelligence, eloquence, and learning, and that he had acquired great influence in the Church of Rome.* The best proof of this is that he was chosen by the Church to be its organ in conveying to Cyprian its adhesion to the disciplinary decisions which he had submitted to it for the approval of the brethren.† Through this letter we are able to form some opinion of Novatian himself at this period of his life. We see that while yielding approval to Cyprian, he is prepared to go further than Cyprian does, and already inclines to greater severity. After enunciating broadly the principle of the independence of the Churches in relation to one another, he lays down the basis on which all rules of discipline should rest. "What," he says, "can be more in harmony with the state of peace in the Church, or more necessary in time of the war of persecution, than the maintenance of the just severity of the Divine discipline?" ‡ It is this discipline which is the rudder of the Church, by which alone it can be safely steered off the rocks. This is no innovation. Severity forms part of the ancient tradition of the Church, and of the faith of primitive times. § It is the sacred trust which we must guard at all costs, for it is infinitely worse to fall from the height once occupied, than never to have attained to it.

Novatian recalls the just rigour of the measures taken against those who, not only had sacrificed to idols, but had also shielded themselves by obtaining for

* "Jactet se licet et philosophiam vel eloquentiam suam superbis vocibus prædicet." Cyprian, "Ep." 55, 20.
† "Novatiano tunc scribente." Ibid. 55, 4. ‡ Ibid. 30, 2.
§ "Antiqua hæc apud nos severitas." Ibid. 30, 2.

money false certificates. It makes but little difference whether these certificates were presented by themselves or not. We should judge that the writer of this letter had already some fear that salutary discipline was likely to be relaxed. "Far, very far from the Church of Rome," said he, "be any attempt to undermine its strength by a profane laxity, and to weaken the force of discipline by overthrowing the majesty of the faith."* There could be no surer method to envenom the wounds which it is pretended thus to heal. Novatian glories in the fact that the confessors of Rome have been faithful to these holy rules, and have understood that it is a sacred duty, transmitted to them through glorious sufferings, not to weaken the authority of the gospel. Novatian felicitates Cyprian on the support he has given to the good cause, and on the declaration of approval he has elicited from the Roman martyrs. He does not enter into detail on the disciplinary measures of Cyprian, which he may in all probability not have accepted without some reserve, but as chief of the rigorist party he could but applaud the firmness of his conduct as a whole. Novatian adds that this entire question of discipline is to wait for a decisive solution till the new bishop, who is to be Fabianus' successor, shall be nominated. Not till then could the Church, as a whole, give to the decisions arrived at the authority of a competent deliberation of all its representatives.

Novatian did not compromise himself much by these declarations, for he had, at this time, the full hope of himself (as bishop) directing the deliberations. The fact

* "Absit ab ecclesia Romana vigorem suum tam profana facilitate dimittere." Cyprian, "Ep." 30, 3.

of his having been chosen to be the organ of his Church in its communications with the greatest bishop of the age, was the proof of the ascendency of his party and a presage of his own election. Beyond this, the conclusion of the letter clearly shows that its author will incline to severity. "Consider," he says to Cyprian, "the whole world desolated by apostasy; see everywhere the scattered ruins left by these innumerable falls. The measures to be taken must correspond to the extent of the evil; the remedy must not be slighter than the wound. We have yet to learn if the cause of the fall has not been the false temerity inspired in the hearts of those who have fallen." *

Novatian leaves them one hope. He will not drive them utterly to despair. He is constrained, moreover, to remember that he is to represent moderate views, if he will not arouse a premature conflict in the Church of which he is at this time the mouthpiece. He thus sums up his views on the subject of the recreant Christians. "Let them knock at the doors of the Church, but let them not force them.† Let their tears plead for them." Novatian concludes by observing that God is not only merciful, but just; and that Jesus Christ has said, "I will deny before my Father those who have denied me before men. If He prepares heaven, He also prepares hell."

In a word, the Church of Rome, in concert with the bishops of the neighbouring Churches, had adjourned the final decision till a new bishop should have been appointed. Meanwhile exception was to be made in favour

* "Non sit minor medicina quam vulnus." Cyprian, "Ep." 30, 6.
† "Pulsent sane fores, sed non utique confringant." Ibid. 30, 7.

of fallen Christians, who, being at the point of death, give evidence of sincere repentance. This was clearly a temporary concession of Novatian to the party in the Church which was inclined to lenity. It is plain, from this letter, that if the two parties are for the present united, it is by a very fragile bond, and that the disciplinarians are only waiting the election of the bishop, to urge on sterner measures. With regard to Novatian himself, we conclude from this document that he was a pious, eloquent, and able man, one worthy to be the spokesman of his Church.

His hopes were doomed to speedy disappointment. In the year 251, Cornelius, the representative of the opposite party, was elected bishop. This was the signal for a rupture. The partisans of Novatian could not acquiesce in the frustration of their hopes. They had thought themselves on the eve of victory, and about to revenge Hippolytus by placing in the see of Rome a bishop who should be the true inheritor of his spirit.

Let us picture to ourselves what would have been the mortification of the Jansenists of the seventeenth century if they had had the chance of placing one of their representatives at the head of the Church, and had then been suddenly defeated. We can hardly conceive what smothered fires of passion lie at the heart of religious minorities, constrained to champ the bit in seeming submission.

Immediately on the election of Cornelius, intestine war was declared. Novatian seems, in the first instance, to have resisted the desire of his followers, who would have named him as bishop without delay. So

at least he wrote to Dionysius of Alexandria.* But there was a man in Rome ready to fan the spark of discord, and to urge on violent measures. This was Novatus, the schismatic of Carthage, who had long been an unscrupulous troubler of the peace of the Church. He was the soul of the party of resistance, and threw all his ardent zeal into the cause.† Novatian yielded to his influence, took the decisive step, and allowed himself to be nominated bishop. Three obscure bishops of Italy came to consecrate him. One of them, who speedily forsook him, pretended that Novatian had inaugurated the consecration by a scene of debauch, endeavouring to intoxicate those whom he wished to make his accomplices.‡ This gross calumny does not deserve a moment's belief. The bishop who had allowed himself for a brief time to be led into schism, would fain make his peace at any price, and he knew that the best means to this end would be to bring accusations against the formidable rival of Cornelius. How can we suppose that the head of the austere party would have dishonoured and ruined his cause by an act which was in flagrant contradiction to all his pretensions. Dionysius of Alexandria would not have written to a man with a reputation thus blemished, in the tone of brotherly regard which he used in seeking to win him back.

The contest between the two parties would evidently be a severe one. The first result of the rupture was to enable Novatian and his party to throw aside the garb of caution they had hitherto worn. They declared

* Δι' ὅρκων φοβερῶν τινῶν πιστούμενος τὸ μηδ' ὅλως ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεσθαι. Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 43. "Epistola Cornelii ad Fabium."

† Cyprian, "Ep." 52, 2.

‡ Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 43.

themselves at once as the advocates of the most rigid severity in the question of discipline; they returned to the ancient tradition of the Church, in the form in which Hippolytus had embodied it. The possibility of restoration to the Church was denied to all who in any manner, whether by word or act of their own, or through the medium of others, had denied the faith in times of persecution. They were left to the mercy of God; their repentance might be accepted by the Judge who alone tries the hearts, but the Church could no more open her doors to them. *

Not content with this exclusion, they extended it, after the manner of the Montanists, to all grave offences, which they called also mortal sins, sustaining themselves by Tertullian's powerful polemics. They went yet further, for this implacable discipline was a consequence of their idea of the Church. They would not allow that the Church should be a mixed society: it was to be preserved from all contact with evil, and to maintain a blameless reputation.† Hence they called themselves *the pure*. In order to show how completely they repudiated the old ecclesiastical organisation, they subjected their adherents to a second baptism.

Thus we find in Novatianism, in a new form, the

* Eusebius, "H.E." vi. 43. *Ταῖς πανταχοῦ ἐκκλησίαις ἔγραψε μὴ δέχεσθαι τοὺς ἐπιτεθυκότας εἰς τὰ μυστήρια, ἀλλὰ προτρέπειν αὐτοὺς εἰς μετάνοιαν, τήν τε συγχώρησιν ἐπιτρέπειν θεῷ τῷ δυναμένῳ καὶ ἐξουσιαν ἔχοντι συγχωρεῖν ἁμαρτήματα.* Socrates, "H. E." iv. 28.

† Pacianus of Barcelona, who lived at the close of the fourth century, has thus epitomised the views of the Novatians on the subject of the Church. "Quod mortale peccatum ecclesia dare non possit, immo quod ipsa pereat recipiendo peccantes." "Contra Novat." Epist. iii. Akesius, a Novatian bishop, refused restoration at the council of Nicæa, not only to the *lapsi*, but to all who had been guilty of any mortal sin. Socrates, "H. E." i. 10.

same principles which, thirty years before, had raised such violent controversies in Rome, and had been so signally condemned. They had never had so good an opportunity of gaining the ascendency. The adherents of the schism were numerous; its leaders were energetic and able; they engaged at once in active propagandism, sending emissaries into all the Churches,* and aiming to secure the election of bishops holding their doctrines wherever they had a nucleus of followers. In Rome itself the schismatics had on their side the confessors, who were inclined to severity. These appear at the commencement of the movement to have heartily entered into it.

For a brief space there seemed hope that Novatian might obtain some favour with Cyprian. It was remembered that he had written, in the name of the Church of Rome, a letter approving Cyprian's policy. The martyrs who were on his side had lent most useful support to the bishop of Carthage in his contest with the confessors of Africa, when these showed themselves inclined to excessive indulgence. Cornelius was as yet a stranger to Cyprian; grave calumnies were current with regard to him. He was accused of being a *libellaticus*, that is, of having secured his safety in time of persecution by a false certificate of apostasy. Cyprian was troubled at first by these false reports which had reached his ear. A delegation of bishops was sent from Africa to Rome, to collect accurate information on the election of Cornelius.†

A bishop of Africa, Antonianus, had given his warm

* "Per plurimas civitates novos apostolos suos mittat." Cyprian, "Ep." 55, 20.

† Ibid. 44, 1.

adherence to Novatian.* Novatian had further found a hearing with Fabianus, bishop of Cæsarea, who had called a synod, clearly with the intention of supporting him.† The danger was great for Cornelius, who appears to have had a valiant heart but a feeble mind; for we find him, in the height of the crisis, allowing himself to be influenced for a moment against Cyprian by the deacon Felicissimus, when his one hope of safety lay in securing the support of the great bishop of Carthage.

These misunderstandings between the heads of the two great centres of Western Christendom were quickly dispelled. The deputation of African bishops which had been sent to Rome assured Cyprian that the election of Cornelius had been perfectly regular.‡ The part played by Novatus, the Carthaginian, in the formation of the new schism, had helped to enlighten them. Moreover, Novatianism had sought to stir up the elements of discord in Carthage itself. Felicissimus, as we have already said, had gone to Rome for the purpose of abetting schism,§ while the priest Maximus had gone, in the name of Novatian, to disturb the peace of the African Church, and canvass there for the episcopal office. He got it conferred upon himself by an insignificant minority, altogether ignoring Fortunatus, whom Felicissimus had recently made bishop.‖ Henceforward the cause of Cornelius became the cause of Cyprian. The bishop of Carthage entered

* Cyprian, "Ep." 55, 1.

† *Φαβίῳ ὑποκατακλινομένῳ τῷ σχίσματι.* Eusebius, "H.E." vi. 14. See Socrates, "H. E." iv. 28. ‡ Cyprian, "Ep." 51, 7. § Ibid. 59, 1.

‖ "Nam et pars Novatiani Maximum presbyterum nuper ad nos a Novatiano legatum miss.m atque a nostra communicatione rejectum nunc istic sibi fecisse pseudo episcopum dicitur." Cyprian, "Ep." 59, 11.

into the contest with full vigour. His first blows were aimed at the African recalcitrants. In the eloquent letter which he addressed to the Bishop Antonianus, who had been for a moment misled, he gave noble expression to the rules of moderate discipline which governed the Church. "The fallen Christians," said Cyprian, "have been kept waiting while the persecution lasted. The question of their restoration has been decided in Africa, in the synod held after the restoration of peace to the Church. Cornelius has been recognised as lawfully invested with the episcopate, and all the calumnies against him have been refuted. With regard to the discipline which he adopts, it is the same as was sanctioned by the second synod held at Carthage. It is at once severe and prudent for fallen Christians not in the article of death, and it provides milder measures for those approaching their end: in the case of these only it dispenses with the usual interval before restoration. In brief, according to Cyprian, an attentive inquiry is made into each particular case, and the strict rules of penitence are only waived in the immediate presence of death. "O mockery of a false brotherhood!" * he exclaims, in allusion to the extreme severities of the schismatic party. "O miserable deception of those who weep and groan! O vain and fruitless tradition of heresy! Sinners are exhorted to repentance, and yet their repentance can avail nothing. You say to your brethren: 'Weep, pour floods of tears, groan day and night; but for all this, you shall die outside the Church. You shall do all that in you lies to obtain peace, but

* "O frustrandæ fraternitatis irrisio!" Cyprian, "Ep." 55, 23.

there shall be no peace for you.' Let us not thus repel any penitent. Let those who seek the mercy of the God of fatherly compassions, know that His priests can restore to them the peace of the Church. Let us accept the groans of the suppliants, and not crush the fruit of penitence. The philosophy of Christ is not the pitiless wisdom of the Stoics."

By such exhortations did Cyprian endeavour to win back the wavering. He did not hesitate to strike a blow at his obstinate opponents, having in this step the support of his brethren in the episcopate. Hesitation was no longer possible, for Novatian had himself crossed the sea, and come to plant the standard of schism on African soil. His cause had been speedily lost in Rome, in spite of his zealous endeavours to bind his followers together. He had constrained them to take an oath before God, over the wine and bread of the Eucharist, that they would never forsake him.* But his efforts failed. The confessors who for a time had stood by him had yielded to the eloquent arguments of the bishop of Carthage, and had returned to Cornelius. A humiliating scene had sealed this reconciliation. They had been seen presenting themselves before their bishop, who was supported by five other bishops, and declaring before all the Christian people that they had allowed themselves to be misled through ignorance, but that they desired henceforth religiously to maintain the peace of the Church. "We acknowledge," they said, "that Cornelius has been chosen of God Almighty, and of Jesus Christ, as bishop of the very holy Church Catholic. We confess our error. We have been the

* Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 43.

victims of an imposture, and we have allowed ourselves to be ensnared by artful words; for even while we seemed to enter into the communion of a schismatic, our soul was always sincerely attached to the Church. We do not forget that there is but one God, one Christ, one Holy Spirit, and that there ought to be but one bishop of the Church Catholic." These words, which show to what a degree schism tended, by the reaction it produced, to strengthen the hands of the hierarchy, were received with acclamation by all present. They embraced the confessors with many tears, and with every demonstration of approval on the part of the Christian people their reintegration was celebrated.* Cornelius had, at the same time, assembled a large synod in Rome, in which sat sixty bishops, and a great number of priests and deacons. The formal excommunication of Novatian and his followers was voted unanimously.† Cornelius had not waited for this opportunity to condemn Felicissimus. When he was thrown into prison, in the course of the year 252, he might consider himself victorious over schism. His adversaries might not lay down their arms even in presence of his glorious captivity, which was speedily terminated by martyrdom; but it was a vain resistance, and he left to his successor his power intact, and even augmented.

In the East the cause of Novatian met with rapid reverses. The greatest bishop of the Christian East had declared against him. Dionysius of Alexandria had written him a very noble letter, urging him to

* "Una vox erat omnium gratias Deo agentium." Cyprian, "Ep," 49, 2.
† Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 43.

abandon his schismatic views. He had represented to him that it was as noble to suffer for the sake of the unity of the Church, as to endure martyrdom for the faith from the hands of the pagans. * The synod which was to be held at Cæsarea, and which might possibly have shown itself favourable to the Novatians, was suspended almost as soon as assembled, by the death of Bishop Fabianus. † Gaul had held out strong hopes to the schismatics. Several bishops had attached themselves to them, but these appear not to have continued long in the same mind, for no mention is made of them after Cyprian's letter to Stephen. ‡

Novatianism was thus conquered at all points, and could no more hope to maintain itself within the Church. From without, its adherents still continued to oppose the victorious hierarchy. These schismatics were never classed, however, with heretics, properly so called, for at Nicæa they were treated with great tolerance. Their bishops, if they would abjure schism, might be recognised as priests of the Church, and Constantine left them their places of worship. In the East they became confounded with the relics of the Montanist sect, and with the Quatordecimanians. § Their defeat must not make us forgetful of the importance of the movement they initiated. They had succeeded for a moment in creating a profound division in the Church, and had been on the eve of being recognised by an important synod of the Christian East. The explanation of their influence is that the schism of Novatian cast its roots into a heroic past; that it was the last and most power-

* Euseb. "H. E." vi. 45. † Ibid. vi. 46. ‡ Cyprian, "Ep." 68, 1, 2. § "Cod. Theodos." lib. xvi. tit. v. 2; "Can. Nic." 8; Socrates, "H. E." iv. 28.

ful manifestation of that party of vigorous discipline and of Christian liberty which, from the time of "Pastor Hermas," had so vigorously withstood the hierarchy.

We must admit, moreover, that both parties, widely as they differed, had one error in common: neither knew how to distinguish between the visible and the invisible Church. The severer school sought to realise on earth the purity of heaven, and to enforce it by an iron-discipline, as if the spirit of evil could not find stealthy access in spite of their closest barriers; as if absolute perfection here on earth were not a chimera; as if it were not the path of wisdom and right to open the doors of the Church to fallen Christians on their giving appreciable tokens of sincere repentance, even though these could never be absolutely certain. The mistake which this party made with regard to holiness, their adversaries made with regard to the unity of the Church. They sought an external, visible realisation of it, and hence they visited with excommunication mere differences of discipline and organisation, forgetting that there is a higher, truer unity—the unity of the faith, a unity in essentials which is quite compatible with diversities, and regards them as the natural consequence of our imperfect conceptions, hence not to be treated as insurmountable barriers between Christians. When Cyprian, in the height of the Novatian controversy, sent to Rome his treatise on the Unity of the Church, the doctrinal scope of which we have already described, he little dreamed that he, the apostle of Catholicity, was laying the basis of the greatest of all schisms, by identifying one of the visible forms of Christianity with that Christianity itself, and by rejecting from the Church

other forms, all more or less imperfect, but having an equal right to their place beneath the shadow of the Cross, in virtue of that saying of the Divine Master, "He that is not against me is with me."

§ 3.—*Controversy of Cyprian with the See of Rome on the Question of the Baptism of Heretics.*

Novatianism being vanquished, it would seem that Cyprian might now rest from ecclesiastical disputes, and devote himself entirely to the building up of his Church —a task the more needful as a new persecution was already impending. But the case was far otherwise. Another controversy commenced for him at once, not now with the schismatics, but with the party of authority to which he had done such signal service. The episcopate, according to his ideal of it, was to know no resistance from beneath or domination from above. Thus, when the bishop of Rome sought to impose his judgment upon a disputed point, on the other bishops, as one of his predecessors had endeavoured to do in the century preceding, he encountered in Cyprian the same opposition which Victor had aroused in Irenæus. These great bishops were as jealous of their independence as of their authority. We shall not enlarge upon the special subject of difference between Cyprian and the bishop of Rome, because this would involve an exposition of theological controversies to which we need not recur. The principal point on which the Church of Africa differed from that of Rome was the baptism of heretics. At Carthage such baptism was declared to be of no value, because it had been administered outside of the true Church. At Rome, on the contrary, it was

thought needless to repeat the rite, because the name of Jesus Christ, in which it had been administered, rendered it valid. The laying on of hands was deemed sufficient for the admission into the Church of the heretic who repudiated his past errors. The question was a complicated one. On the one hand the bishop of Rome showed more breadth than Cyprian, in admitting that there was a basis of Christian truth among schismatics, like the Novatians. On the other hand, Cyprian attached to the moral aspect of the ordinance of baptism greater importance than his adversary, who seemed to rest satisfied with mere sacramental virtue. Beyond this, the opinion of Stephen must not be forced. The only baptism admitted by him was that which had been administered in the name of Jesus Christ; he even exacted that the ancient formula, which united the names of Father, Son, and Spirit, should have been used in full. We should gather from him that all the heretics were agreed on this point.* This was not true as a matter of fact, but it shows what was the doctrinal standpoint taken by him.

The two adversaries, in the heat of debate, each gave trenchant expression to his ideas. Cyprian laid it down, as an absolute principle, that baptism outside of the Church is not valid, since there is but one baptism appointed for the Church.† Bishop Stephen

* See, on this point, Hæfele's learned dissertation: "Concilien Geschichte," vol. i. Stephen said that the heretics did not rebaptise their adherents who came from the Church to them. "Cum ipsi hæretici proprie alterutrum ad se venientes non baptizent." Cyprian, "Ep." 74, 1. According to Stephen, then, they recognised as their own formula of baptism, that used by the Church, and hence the bishop of Rome concludes the identity of the two formulæ among all the heretics. This was a historical error.

† "Pro certo tenentes neminem foris baptizari extra ecclesiam posse, cum sit baptisma unum in sancta ecclesia constitutum." Cyprian, "Ep." 70, 1.

expressed, in the following words, a principle directly contrary: "If one come to you from any heretic body whatever, follow the ancient tradition: give him the laying on of hands in token of his penitence."* It is clear that these views were diametrically opposed. No conflict need have ensued if the wise practice of primitive Christianity had been observed, which tolerated diversity in unity; or if the wise counsels of Irenæus had been obeyed, who had admitted the lawfulness of a difference of practice in the East and West in the celebration of Easter. The bishop of Rome was not so minded. He would not only persuade, but compel; he intended to force upon the whole Church the yoke of a uniformity forged at Rome.

Cyprian entered into this contest with a vigour and asperity at least equal to that which he had displayed in treating the Novatians. His reasoning, in the letters he wrote on the subject, reverts incessantly to the unity of the Church, beyond the bounds of which the Holy Spirit cannot work.† It follows that baptism in the name of the Son is altogether insufficient.‡ Martyrdom itself loses all its fruits when it is suffered by a heretic, and the glorious baptism of blood is a barren thing apart from the unity of the Church. Beyond that pale is no salvation.§ When Stephen appeals to tradition, Cyprian stoutly maintains the higher claims of truth, against which custom can avail nothing. "It is not," he says, "the province of custom to command; right must rule.

* "Si quis ergo a quacunque hæresi venerit ad vos, nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est, ut manus illi imponatur in pœnitentiam." Cyprian, "Ep." 74, 1.

† Ibid. 69–74.

‡ Ibid. 69, 11; Ibid. 73, 19; Ibid. 74, 5.

§ "Hæretico nec baptismo sanguinis proficere ad salutem potest, quia salus extra ecclesiam non est." Ibid. 73, 21.

To bow to a better opinion is not to be vanquished, it is to be instructed. * Truth is greater than custom. † Because an error is ancient, it does not follow it is to be perpetuated: it becomes the truly wise who fear God, to embrace the truth joyfully, rather than to take the part of heretics against right and reason. Custom without truth is only antiquated error." ‡ Cyprian proclaims the higher authority of Holy Scripture, to whose testimony he appeals continually, and which he lays down as the decisive rule. § "We are told," he says to Stephen, "that we must change no tradition." Whence comes this tradition? Does it come from Divine authority, from the Gospels, or the writings of the apostles? Then we are bound to obey it according to the command of Joshua: 'Let the book of the law not remove from thy lips!' If, then, you appeal to that which is commanded in the Gospels, or contained in the Epistles or the Acts of the Apostles, you will find in these the holy and Divine tradition which we are bound to observe." ‖ Cyprian does not recognise any ecclesiastical authority as sovereign and infallible, whether it be that of Rome or any other. He admits, indeed, that the unity of the Church, which is his idol, had its ideal representation in the apostolic body in the person of St. Peter, and that this is perpetuated in the episcopal chair of Rome; ¶ but he expressly

* "Non enim vincimur, quando nobis afferuntur meliora, sed instruimur." Cyprian, "Ep." 71, 3.

† "Quasi consuetudo major sit veritate." Ibid. 73, 13.

‡ "Non tamen quia aliquando erratum est, ideo semper errandum est." Ibid. 73, 23. "Consuetudo sine veritate vetustas erroris est." Ibid. 74, 9.

§ "Nec hoc sine scripturæ divinæ auctoritate proponimus." Ibid. 73, 8.

‖ "Si ergo aut in evangelio præcipitur aut in apostolorum epistolis aut actibus continetur, observetur divina hæc et sancta traditio." Ibid. 74, 2.

¶ "Una ecclesia a Christo domino super Petrum origine unitatis et ratione fundata." Ibid. 70, 3.

denies that Peter had any supremacy over Paul and his colleagues in the apostolate, as he expressly denies to the then bishop of Rome any superiority over his colleagues in the episcopate. "Peter," he says, "whom the Lord first chose, and upon whom He built His Church, made no arrogant claim to superiority when discussing with Paul the question of circumcision: he had not the audacity to say that the primacy was his, and that those who should come after must submit themselves to him.*

Cyprian gave practical proof of his principles in his proud resistance to Stephen, when the latter had condemned him and treated him as a false bishop. † Stephen went yet further: he issued a decree of actual excommunication against his colleague, refused to hear any of his party, and even forbade the faithful to receive them under their roof. ‡

Cyprian, indignant at this conduct, passed bitter criticisms upon Stephen's proceedings. Not content with resisting his claims, he reproached him with writing letters full of pride and contradiction, and altogether irrelevant. He even accused him of incapacity and want of intelligence. § "Let us ask ourselves," he says, "how a priest can sustain the judgment of God if he accepts the baptism of heretics,

* "Nam nec Petrus quem primum Dominus elegit et super quem ædificavit ecclesiam suam, cum secum Paulus de circumcisione postmodum disceptaret, vindicavit sibi aliquid insolenter aut arroganter assumsit, ut diceret se primatum tenere et obtemperari a novellis et posteris sibi potius oportere." Cyprian, "Ep." 71, 3.

† "Non pudet Stephanum Cyprianum pseudochristum et pseudoapostolum dicere." Ibid. 75, 26.

‡ "Ut venientibus non solum pax et communio, sed et tectum et hospitium negaretur." Ibid. 75, 25.

§ "Imperite atque improvide scripsit." Ibid. 74, 1.

when the Lord has said, in words of solemn threatening, 'O priests, if ye hearken not, and write not my laws in your hearts, so that ye give honour to my name, I will send my curse upon you, and will even curse your blessings.'" Does *he* honour God who accepts the baptism of Marcion? Does *he* honour God who affirms that children are born to Him of the strange and adulterous woman? Does *he* honour God who, despising the unity and truth which proceed from the Divine law, makes himself the avenger of heresy against the Church? Does *he* honour God who, declaring himself the friend of heretics and the foe of Christians, pronounces excommunication upon the priests of God, who keep the truth and the unity of the Church? If God is indeed honoured *thus*, let us throw down our arms, let us go into captivity, let us deliver over to the devil the ordinances of the gospel, the majesty of God, the sacraments of the Divine host, the standard of the heavenly army! The Church has then only to give way to heresy, light to yield to darkness, truth to falsehood, Christ to Anti-Christ. Truth and the faith are betrayed, and we see the Church lending her sanction to that which is dictated by those without.* St. Paul has said that a bishop should be "apt to teach." Now he is "apt to teach" who is himself willing to be taught. For it is needful not only that a bishop teach, but also that he learn. He is the best teacher who is daily making progress in the truth.† It was not possible to utter a more emphatic protest against the arrogant claim of the Roman bishop to be a sovereign authority on matters of doctrine.

* Cyprian, "Ep." 74, 8.

† "Oportet episcopum non tantum docere sed et discere." Ibid. 74, 10.

Cyprian held two great provincial councils on the occasion of this grave controversy, and he communicated their decisions to Stephen.* When the contest had become very bitter, and the bishop of Rome had pronounced excommunication upon Cyprian, he sought the support of the great Churches of the East, to which the decree of excommunication had been sent. Dionysius of Alexandria repelled the assumptions of Stephen and acted with Cyprian.† Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea, followed his example, and protested with great vehemence, not only against Stephen's opinion, which he refuted on grounds analogous to those advanced by Cyprian, but also against his pretensions to authority altogether. He reminds him that in spite of Victor's attempt to compel all the Churches to observe Easter in the same manner, the Christian East had adhered to its own practice without any violation of the unity of the Church. If it is true that Jesus Christ founded His Church upon the Apostle Peter, it was certainly not upon him personally, but upon his faithful testimony. Stephen vainly boasts of being Peter's successor, while he brings into the edifice other than the true, living stones. "Let us join," he says, "truth to tradition, and against the tradition of the Romans let us set the true tradition — that of Christ and His apostles."‡ Firmilianus rises into a very transport of rage when he says to Stephen, "The false witness shall not go un-

* Cyprian, "Ep." 70 and 72.

† "Dionysius in Cypriani et Africanæ synodi dogma consentiens de hæreticis rebaptizandis." Hyeron. "De viris illustrib." c. 69; Dionys. "Ep. ad Xyst.;" Eusebius, vii. 5.

‡ "Consuetudini Romanorum consuetudinem sed veritatis opponimus, ab initio hoc tenentes quod a Christo et ab apostolis traditum est." Cyprian, "Ep." 75, 19; Ibid. 6, 16, 17.

punished. Thou art worse than all the heretics. Art thou indignant at this? See then thy folly, thou who fearest not to blame those who are contending for the truth against a lie. It is plain that he who is lacking in prudence is swift to wrath, for nothing more inclines to passion than the absence of wisdom and of reason."*

So thought the great bishops of the third century on the question of infallibility. "Let us admire," ironically says Firmilianus, "the scrupulous manner in which Stephen fulfils the duty of humility and gentleness! What could be a clearer mark of these graces, than his placing himself in opposition to so many bishops all over the world, and breaking the peace with them all on various pretexts?" The bishop of Cæsarea does not hesitate to speak of his colleague at Rome as the true disturber of unity. "How can such a man," he says, "recognise the unity of the spiritual body, who has no unity in his own soul, but is so flighty, fickle, and uncertain?"†

The pretensions of the bishop of Rome were further disallowed on another point, of not less importance. Two Spanish bishops had been deposed as Novatians: their places had been regularly filled. In their eager desire to regain their sees, they appealed to the bishop of Rome, who at once espoused their cause. Cyprian uttered an urgent protest against this right of appeal and this hasty restoration. He insisted upon the moral qualifications which alone make the

* "Nam quod imperitos etiam animosos manifestum est, dum per inopiam consilii et sermonis ad iracundiam facile vertuntur." Cyprian, "Ep." 78, 24.

† "Apud talem potest esse unum corpus et unus spiritus apud quem fortasse ipsa anima una non est sic lubrica et mobilis et incerta?" Ibid. 78, 25.

true bishop. Canonical appointment, in his view, gives official recognition to such qualities, but cannot be a substitute for them when they are lacking. His protest was supported by a large synod held at Carthage. The bishop of Carthage asked, in the name of his colleagues, by what right discipline and the rules of episcopal election were violated, to benefit men unworthy of this high office, and whose unworthiness brought reproach on the Church. What value can there be in an appeal addressed to a bishop like Stephen,—ill-informed, and at a distance from the country where the facts have transpired on which judgment is pronounced?* Thus the independence of the Churches was triumphantly vindicated against the assumptions of the bishop of Rome.

§ 4. *Progress made by the Hierarchical Party on the Death of Cyprian. The last Councils of the Third Century.*

Through all the long and complicated struggles which we have been describing, we trace the distinct progress of the hierarchical idea. Let us note well its constant advances; let us observe it as it rises from the dust of this long combat, under the precise form which it assumed at the death of Cyprian, and which it will retain till the era of the great Councils and the alliance of the Church with the Empire. It will then receive its final transformation by the formal recognition of ecclesiastical centralisation, doubly consecrated by the primacy of the bishop of Rome and the sovereign authority of the œcumenical councils.

* "Basilides Stephanum collegam nostrum longe positum et gestæ rei ac veritatis ignarum fefellit." Cyprian, "Ep." 67, 5.

Upon these two points alone it is as yet imperfect, for the episcopate is already raised to its highest elevation. It will even be constrained to restrict its power in the following period, that it may take the place assigned to it in the centralised Catholic Church. Everything has favoured the growth of the hierarchical idea. The decline of the pure evangelical doctrine of grace, —the principle and pledge of the equality of Christians and of the universal priesthood—reintroduced the reign of law and the sacerdotal class. Sacramentarian superstition availing itself of the unguarded raptures of mysticism, and changing the eucharistic meal into a sacrifice, tended to put the Christian priest in the position of a priest of the type of the old covenant.* The passion for unity, made more intense by the reaction against schism, changes the idea of the Church. This gradually ceases to be regarded as a spiritual society, requiring agreement only in things essential, while allowing perfect freedom of thought and practice on secondary points. It becomes an institution, a mother Church, identified with an organisation which has a growing tendency to assume fixed and rigid forms.† Cyprian's treatise on the unity of the Church, of which we have spoken in our summary of his theological views, gives us the most exact expression of this ecclesiastical theory, which substitutes uniformity for unity, and excludes from a petrified Catholicism many of the diversities which the Church of the second century tolerated without hesitation. The episcopal power

* The Lord's Supper is spoken of by Cyprian as "Sacrificium Dominicum" ("Ep." 63, 9), or as an offering, "oblatio." "Ep." 1, 2; Ibid. 12, 2. See Ritschl, "Altcathol. Kirche," p. 561.

† Ibid. p. 566.

came forth with new strength from every conflict, though it had often a strong body of opposition to overcome, and had to do battle with most illustrious teachers and eminent saints. At Alexandria it secured, under Demetrius, diocesan supremacy. At Rome, in consequence of the stormy controversies provoked at first by the Montanists, and subsequently resumed, with more moderation, by St. Hippolytus, it had gained possession of the power of the keys, —the tremendous right of pardoning all sins by virtue of the priestly character. The development of the question of discipline under Cyprian, his twofold controversy, on the one hand with the confessors who carried the principle of indulgence to an extreme, and on the other with the Novatians, who erred no less on the side of severity; all these vicissitudes of this great episcopate confirm the victory won at Rome some years earlier by the hierarchical party, freeing it from that association with petty passions and unworthy ambitions by which it was at first dishonoured. By his successful opposition to the imprudent confessors, who would have exalted their testimony above episcopal authority, Cyprian confirmed that authority, placed it beyond dispute, and established the principle that to the ecclesiastical office belongs the last appeal, and that not even pre-eminent holiness may prevail against it. Let us acknowledge, however, that he avoids the excess into which Callisthus was betrayed in his famous decree which declared the bishop's office to be irrevocable, even when mortal sins had been committed by those holding it. We have seen that Cyprian, in his

polemics against the apostate bishops of Spain, maintained that moral qualities were necessary to the exercise of the office of a bishop, which possesses no inherent value apart from such qualities. He thus sacrificed the logic of the hierarchical system to the requirements of the Christian conscience.

In opposition to these schismatics, and to the Novatians, Cyprian establishes what may be called the episcopal sovereignty, so vehemently contested by his first adversaries, Novatus and Felicissimus. He regards the bishop as the successor and inheritor of the apostles.* In the same manner, therefore, as the apostolate found its centre of unity in Peter, without his exercising any personal supremacy, so the episcopate has its centre in the chair of the successors of Peter, without being bound to recognise in it any supreme authority. "The episcopate is one, the bishops are equal." † They are all lords of their own domain. As priests, presiding at the eucharistic sacrifice, they are the supreme judges of the Church, and hold in their hands the keys of the Divine pardon. Nevertheless, they should do nothing without their clergy, and without the consent of the Christian people by whom they are chosen.‡ In this aspect the universal priesthood is still, in some measure, recognised. The ecclesiastical order is, however, very firmly established, and the line of demarcation between the laity and the

* "Episcopos, id est apostolos." Cyprian, "Ep." 3, 3.

† "Item episcopatus unus episcoporum multorum concordi numerositate diffusus." Ibid. 55, 20. "Episcopatus unus est cujus singulis in solidum pars tenetur." "De Unit. Cat." 5.

‡ "A primordio episcopatus mei statuerim nihil sine consilio vestro et sine consensu plebis, mea privatim sententia gerere." Cyprian, "Ep." 14, 4. "Presbyteris et diaconis."

clergy is drawn with the utmost exactness. The hierarchy already consists of several grades. The Roman clergy in the middle of the third century is a considerable body, in which the offices are multiplied. It comprehends, beside the bishops, priests, and deacons to the number of seven, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, and keepers of the doors.*

We see from the fragments of the "Apostolical Constitutions," which date from the first half of the third century, how widely this notion of the episcopate had spread in the Church. The bishop, in the second book of the "Apostolical Constitutions," is no longer the same as presented to us in the eighth book of the "Coptic Constitution," where he appears without any sacerdotal character, properly so called. In the later representation, he is at once the judge who awards the Divine favours, and who possesses directly the power of the keys;† the prophet, who is the voice of God;‡ and the priest, who presents to God holy sacrifices.§ The bishop should always be versed in religious knowledge. He must possess sufficient to supply his needs without having recourse to secular occupations.‖ He is a divine being, a mediator between God and men.¶ He cannot be judged by any.** His clergy form, with himself, the senate of the Church.†† Book II. of the "Apostolical Constitutions" seems to

* Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 43.

† Οὕτως ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ καθέξου τὸν λόγον ποιούμενος, ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων κρινειν τοὺς ἡμαρτηκότας. "Const. Apost." ii. 11.

‡ Φθόγγοι θεοῦ. Ibid. ii. 6.

§ Ἱερεῖς παρεστῶτες τῷ θυσιοστηρίῳ. Ibid. ii. 25.

‖ Ibid. ii. 24.

¶ Ὡς ὁ θεός. Ibid. ii. 12. Μεσῖται θεοῦ καὶ τῶν πιστῶν αὐτοῦ. Ibid. ii. 25.

** Ibid. ii. 35.

†† Συνέδριον καὶ βουλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Ibid. ii. 28.

represent him as the subject of a sort of continuous inspiration from the time of his ordination. Cyprian admits nothing of the kind, since he speaks repeatedly of supernatural communications received by him in visions, and not in virtue of his office. The interpolated passages of the letters of Ignatius, which belong to the same period, represent the episcopate as the true vicariat of Christ, apart from which there is no salvation.

The "Apostolical Constitutions" of this date admit, with Cyprian, the equality of the bishops, and ignore the primacy of St. Peter. It is not needful to multiply quotations to establish this independence of the great Churches one of another. Without recurring to the dispute between Cyprian and Stephen, it is enough to read his letters, and to follow him in his ecclesiastical government, in order to discover the absence of any central governing power in the Church of the third century. Each bishop is a pope in his own diocese; he bears the name and exercises the prerogatives of a pope in so far as his spiritual family will recognise the fatherly relation. We read of the pope of Alexandria, the pope of Carthage, as well as the pope of Rome.* Cyprian wrote to Rome as he wrote to the Churches of Cappadocia, or to his colleagues in Africa. "These letters," he says, "I have sent to many of our colleagues, and they have agreed to them, and have replied to me that they would continue to hold our view according to the Catholic faith.†

* "Papam Cyprianum." Cyprian, "Ep." 8, 1.

† "Quæ epistolæ jam plurimis collegis nostris missæ placuerunt, et rescripserunt se quoque nobiscum in eodem consilio secundum catholicam fidem stare." Ibid. 25.

The relations between the Churches have not as yet any official character. This mutual independence is explicitly recognised in the letter written to Cyprian in the name of the Church of Rome, on the subject of his difference with the African confessors. It is true that the letter is from Novatian, but it is written before his schism, and while he still speaks as priest and representative of the Church of the capital of the empire. "O brother Cyprian," he writes, "thou hast indeed our approval rather than our formal judgment on this case, since in praising the acts we would fain share in the honour they merit; for we seem ourselves to have done that which has had so fully our consent as regards both censure and ecclesiastical discipline."* Subsequently Cyprian declares that he had recourse to the advice of Cornelius, only because he could not collect a sufficient number of votes among the bishops of Africa.† He treats Stephen as his colleague.‡ He does not recognise in him any higher power than his own, and it is by the same title that he holds the helm of the Church. Cyprian concerns himself about matters in Rome, as Stephen about those in Carthage. The former does not hesitate to make an inquiry into the election of the latter. We have seen with what energy he repudiates any pretension to the primacy on the part of his colleague of Rome. These results are beyond question; no fictitious documents can overthrow them.

The authority of the councils is as yet very simple. In the synods of the third century sit bishops, priests,

* "Nos non tam judices voluisti quam participes inveniri." Cyprian, "Ep." 30, 1.

† "Ac si minus sufficiens episcoporum in Africa numerus videbitur, etiam Romam super hac re scripsimus." Ibid. 55, 5. ‡ Ibid. 55, 7.

deacons, confessors. The presence of the laity is in almost every instance distinctly stated.* The councils are always free assemblies, convoked whenever any necessity arises, without fixed date, and without subordination of one to another. They meet when the see of Rome is vacant, no less than when it is occupied, for they do not acknowledge in any way its supremacy. They claim neither exceptional inspiration nor infallible authority.†

The letter which communicates to Stephen the deliberations of the Council of Carthage, held on the occasion of the irregular restoration of the bishops of Spain, opens thus:—"We have thought it needful to call together in council a goodly number of priests, in order to take certain steps and to deliberate upon them together. We have discussed and determined many questions, but we have resolved to write to thee chiefly as to what concerns the priestly authority, in order to confer with thy high wisdom."‡ The conclusion of this conciliatory letter is not less remarkable:—"In this matter we desire to do no violence to any, and to issue no commands, for every bishop has the right to exercise his private judgment in the administration of the Church, for which he must answer to God."§

* "Collatione consiliorum cum episcopis, presbyteris, diaconibus, confessoribus, pariter ac stantibus laicis." Cyprian, "Ep." 55, 4,

† "Sancto spiritu suggerente et Domino per visiones multas et manifestas admonente." Ibid. 57, 6.

‡ "Ad quædam disponenda et consilii communis examinatione limanda necesse habuimus, frater carissime, convenientibus in unum pluribus sacerdotibus cogere et celebrare concilium. In quo multa quidem prolata atque transacta sunt, sed de eo vel maxime tibi scribendum et cum tua gravitate ac sapientia conferendum fuit, quod magis pertineat et ad sacerdotalem auctoritatem et ad ecclesiæ catholicæ unitatem pariter ac dignitatem." Ibid. 72, 1.

§ "Qua in re nec nos vim cuiquam facimus aut legem damus, quando habeat in ecclesiæ administratione voluntatis suæ arbitrium liberum unusquique præpositus rationem actus sui Domino redditurus." Ibid, 72, 4.

Could anything bear less resemblance than such a declaration to the authoritative decisions of a council which deems itself infallible?

This liberalism is still more marked in the acts of the Seventh Council of Carthage. Cyprian there expresses himself in these terms:—"It remains for us each one to express our opinion on this question (the baptism of heretics) without using any constraint, or threatening excommunication to those who may differ from us. None of us regards himself as the bishop of bishops, nor would any force his colleagues to obedience by tyrannical terrors. Every bishop, in truth, will, in the latitude of his liberty and power, use his own free judgment; he has no more right to judge his brother than to be judged by him. Let us all await the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone has the power to commit to us the government of His Church and to be our Judge."*

The sovereign authority in the councils of the third century is holy Scripture alone. This is constantly appealed to, and its power is expressly recognised. "According to our purpose," says Cyprian, "when the persecution had subsided, and it was possible to gather together a considerable number of bishops who had been kept by their faith and by the protection of God from any defection, we assembled ourselves with them in council. The holy Scriptures were placed in our midst, to decide between the two opinions, and we inquired together what was the character of the indulgence permitted by the Word of God."† The authority

* "Concil. Carthag." vii.; Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ." iii. 115.
† "Scripturis divinis ex utraque parte prolatis." Cyprian, "Ep." 55, 5.

of apostolic tradition was also invoked, but far less importance was attached to this than to the written tradition, as we may judge from the fragments of the deliberations which have come down to us.*

For a long time the council issued no summary condemnations. Those who were accused of heresy might defend themselves, and the attempt was made to lead them back to the truth by free conferences. In this way Origen succeeded, at a synod held in Arabia, in turning away Beryllus of Bostra from his errors.† He was equally successful on a second mission to the heretics of the same country.‡

Many years later, Dionysius of Alexandria had the like success in a synod held in an obscure suburb of the great metropolis of Egypt, to decide the case of a small millenarian sect. This synod rather resembled a free conference than a council. We may judge, from what Dionysius himself relates to us, how little resemblance it bore to the great ecclesiastical assizes of subsequent ages, which summoned the dissidents to their bar to receive their condemnation. "I much admired," he writes, "the firmness, love of truth, and clear intelligence of our brethren. All was moderation and order in the questions and replies, and in the assent given. We were very careful not to appear obstinate in our preconceived opinions, even when they seemed to us clearly right; nor would we elude any objection. We endeavoured to go back as far as possible to the principles involved in the discussion, and thoroughly

"Item alius Felix a Bamacurra dixit: Et ego ipse secutus divinarum scripturarum auctoritatem." "Concil. Carthag." vii.; Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," iii. 123.

* Ibid. iii. p. 104.

† Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 33.

‡ Ibid. vi. 37.

establish them. We were not ashamed to retract what we had said, and to accept the opinions of our adversaries, whenever their arguments seemed to us really forcible.* On the contrary, our hearts were open before God, and we accepted with frankness and candour all that our opponents could adduce on good evidence and on the teaching of Holy Scripture."

Three very important synods were held at Antioch to discuss the heresy of Paul of Samosata.† The first two, which met between 264 and 269, led to no result, owing to the subtlety of the brilliant bishop, who unfolded his doctrine with infinite art. A pressing letter was written to force him to explain himself. It stated succiently what his colleagues in the episcopate understood by the Christian faith. This rendered subterfuges more difficult.‡ At the third council, held in 269, Paul of Samosata was forced to disclose his real meaning, under the able interrogation of the presbyter Malchion, which made further evasion impossible.§ He was finally condemned, but only as an extreme measure, and after he had been fully heard. The letter from the council which pronounces his condemnation is addressed to the Bishop of Alexandria as well as to the Bishop of Rome, and the council asks no ratification of its sovereign decision. The most important feature of this document is its ecumenical character, for it is addressed to the entire Catholic Church.‖

* *Μήτε εἰ λόγος αἱρεῖ μεταπείθεσθαι καὶ συνομολογεῖν αἰδούμενοι.* Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 24.

† See concerning this heresy, "Early Years of Christianity," vol. iii. "Heresy and Christian Doctrine," pp. 131–136.

‡ "Concil. Edit. Lubbœi," i. 845; Routh, "Reliq. Sacræ," p. 289.

§ Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 29.

‖ *Πάσῃ τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν καθολικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ.* Ibid. vii. 30.

The bishops assembled at Cæsarea, moreover, took upon themselves the responsibility of choosing a successor to Paul of Samosata. They thus infringed the liberty of the local Church by assuming the position of representatives of a great Catholic unity. The innovation was undoubtedly a grave one. It is yet more grievous to see these men who were persecuted but yesterday, and might be proscribed again to-morrow, calling in the aid of the Emperor Aurelian against the refractory bishop whom they were seeking to depose. It is thus that the hierarchical party falls from the very commencement of its career into one of the most perilous temptations to which a Church can be exposed, the temptation to forget that its kingdom is not of this world, and to have recourse to an alien power.* There is still however a vast distance between the pretensions thus advanced and those of the infallible ecumenical and papal councils of later ages. The system of the Romish hierarchy would be a glaring anachronism in the third century. To pretend that this system has been in operation, without essential modifications, from the commencement of the Church's history, is to falsify all its true archives. Instead of fixed and unalterable institutions, we have at this period a free and living Church in which various schools at first subsist side by side, then come into conflict, and are finally crushed under the yoke of arbitrary authority. The hierarchy cannot trace its titles back to this noble past, although we find at every step the traces of its early usurpations and progress. The time is at hand when, allied to the

* Ἀήρηλιανὸν ἐπεισαν ἐξελᾶσαι τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Theodoret, "Hæretic. Fabulæ," ii. 8.

empire and sustained by a foreign force, it may advance without fear.

* If we attempt to enumerate the principal synods of the third century, we arrive at the following results, which are at least approximately correct.

1. The synod convened by Agrippinus, to decide the question of the baptism of heretics (Cyprian, "Ep." 71, 4; Augustine, "De Baptismo," c. Donat. lib. ii. 71). This synod must have been held after the year 205, since at that time Tertullian, in his book "De jejuniis," speaks only of Greek synods. The date 220 appears probable, since, according to the "Philosophoumena," the question of the baptism of heretics only arose with Callisthus, the first bishop who refused to rebaptise them (218–232).

2. Two synods held at Alexandria, with relation to Origen, about the year 231. (Phot. "Codex," 118.)

3. Synod of Iconia on the subject of the baptism of heretics. Firmilianus, who writes to Cyprian about 255, speaks of having taken part in it some long time previously (Jam pridem in Iconio collecti in unum. Cyprian, "Ep." 75, 7), probably at the commencement of his episcopate. This gives us the date 230.

4. Synod on the same subject at Synnada, in Phrygia, according to Dionysius of Alexandria. (Eusebius, "H.E." vii. 7.)

5. Synod of Lambesitana, a colony in Numidia, in which twenty-four bishops sat, and which dealt with a certain Bishop Privatus, accused of hesesy.

6. Two synods in Arabia, in which Origen wins back the heretics. (Eusebius "H.E." vi. 33–37.)

7. African synod, which condemned the priest, Geminius Faustinus.

8. Synod of Carthage (251), on the occasion of the schism. (Cyprian, "Ep.," 57.)

9. Cornelius holds a synod in Rome on the same subject. (Eusebius, "H.E." vi. 43.)

10. In May, 252, another synod at Carthage. (Cyprian, "Ep." 64.) Subject: Restoration of a priest. Baptism of children.

11. Another synod at Carthage on the question of some Spanish priests, who had been wrongfully reinstated by the Bishop of Rome. (Ibid. 67.)

12. First synod concerning the baptism of heretics, in 255. (Ibid. 70.)

13. Another synod in 256 on the same subject. ("Ep." 72.)

14. The synods of Ephesus relating to Paul of Samosata.

See Hæfele, vol. i.

BOOK SECOND.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC WORSHIP IN THE CHURCHES OF THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLIEST CHANGES IN THE FORM OF PRIMITIVE WORSHIP.*

It is an instinct of religious feeling to seek for itself solemn and public expression, not only in word or formula, by which it emerges from the region of the purely internal and mystical, but also in symbol, by which it becomes invested with a tangible form. Man is a complex creature, and can never rest in that which

* Our authorities on all that relates to worship in the second and third centuries are :—

1st. The Fathers of the second and third centuries, from whose authentic documents we draw exact quotations for all that we advance.

2nd. The "Apostolical Constitutions," consulted with judgment and according to the rules already indicated in a previous note.

3rd. The liturgical documents, the critical value of which we shall presently examine.

4th. The great Church histories already quoted.

5th. Special works, and primarily Bingham's book, so rich in documents: "Origines sive antiquitates ecclesiasticæ." Oxford, 1868.

Augustine, "Archæologia," 3 vols. Leipzig, 1839.

Bunsen, "Hippolytus," 2 vols. "Antenicæna," 3 vols.

Dr. Heinrich Alt, "Der Christliche Gottesdienst." Berlin, 1851.

Dr. Harnack, "Der Christliche Gemeindegottesdienst im apostolischen und altcatholischen Zeitalter." Erlangen, 1854.

is purely ideal. Just as the soul finds in its bodily organisation that which reveals it to itself, so thought becomes incarnate in expression; it borrows from nature figurative language, which is a perpetual metaphor. Its familiar use makes us unconscious of this fact, but our attention only needs to be directed to it, and we discover in our current speech all the elements of plastic poetry. Art discovers this hidden poetry, and embodies in exquisite forms those thoughts and sentiments which, by their peculiar character or by their intensity, raise us above the level of common life. What art gives us is not simply an ideal, it is an ideal drawn from life, only embodied in a purified form. One of its distinctive characters is to reveal the ideal to men, or, rather, to reanimate the ideal in their own souls, where it lay in a slumber akin to death, till roused to behold its own fair image in some immortal work of art. High art, born of true genius, derives its power from this fact, that it is in harmony with universal instincts, that it lifts these out of their misty depths and reveals them to themselves, thus creating a community of souls, which is one of the noblest manifestations of the solidarity of the race.

That which is true of art is no less true of worship. This also expresses by symbols the inmost depths of the soul, and, by this very manifestation, calls forth a community of feeling. It is distinguishable from art, properly so-called, by the limitation of its sphere and by its essentially spiritual character: it makes use of art, however, as the fit instrument for its special purpose. In the first place, worship deals exclusively with religion, with the relation of man to God, and its sym-

bolism does not embrace anything which has not this distinct feature. In the second place, worship is a recognition in act, at once of the homage due to God and of actual union with Him: it is adoration and offering. Undoubtedly religious life in the individual and in the family possesses this twofold character; but worship is distinguished by the development of symbolism, which gives to adoration and sacrifice the solemnity of rites observed in common, bringing as it were to a focus all the scattered rays. Public worship is like the golden cup in the Revelation, into which the angels poured the prayers of the saints. It brings together that which elsewhere is dispersed, and by this very fact produces an intenser life.

As is the God, so is the worship. In the religions of nature worship simply reproduces by symbolic representations, gross or poetical, the life of the god, that is to say, the life of nature, for the two existences become confounded. There is the perpetual recurrence of joyous fertility in the fine season, and following it the cold period of destruction and of death. The young hero, whether Adonis or Osiris by name, who only appears upon the enchanted scene of the spring, to be struck down by the fierce darts of the burning sun, is but an embodiment of the annals of the year, of the story of nature, with her regular revolutions. In religions of this order the worship is ever repeating the same thing in its symbolism, exhibiting but one idea, however capricious and varied its embellishments.

We know well that the human soul can never be perfectly satisfied with this puerile mythology, and

that conscience casts its great shadow over it all. The heart of man is tormented with an irrepressible alarm, which it seeks in vain on every hand to allay. Recognising as yet no higher power than nature, it appeals, by sorcery or magic arts, to all her hidden forces for help, or else has recourse to abominable and cruel rites, in order to disarm the anger of the unknown and arbitrary power which seems to rule its destiny. Greek paganism, which, in its humanitarian period, absolutely confounds religion with art, finally falls back into this naturalism of the ancient East, because there seems more hope of succour in its deeper mystery, and because it gives the promise of a supernatural deliverance, of which the graceful poetry of Olympus held out no hope. Rome, which was her own divinity, made worship only a dry and soulless ritualism, which sought no higher good than that of the earthly fatherland, and made no attempt to fill the void in the soul; hence the Latin race became the sure prey of the lowest superstitions as soon as it escaped from the fierce distractions of the conquest of the world.

Upon the soil of Judæa worship assumes a very different character. The worshipper of Jehovah comes into the immediate presence of the God who made the world, and who can never, in the mind of a Jew, be confounded with the work of His hands. The fundamental idea of Judaism is holiness, an awful holiness, which makes man bow in trembling self-abasement before it lifts him up. The Jewish worship is designed to impress deeply upon the soul, both the bitterness of a guilty past and the hope of a glorious future. The

sense of past sin, which is to issue in a great cry for expiation, is fostered by an elaborate ritual of purifying ceremonies all pointing to the deep defilement that has been contracted, and by bleeding sacrifices constantly repeated, because ever insufficient. The hope is fed and fanned as a sacred flame by prophecy, and is developed in worship by all the great types pointing to Messiah. The Jewish priesthood represents this double character of the Old Testament worship. By its exclusive functions it implies the general corruption of a race which cannot approach God directly, while its redemption is as yet unaccomplished, and which has need of mediators apart from itself to present its offerings. For the same reason both the day and the place of worship are distinctly set apart, that they may be separate from the general corruption.

The priesthood is, moreover, a living prophecy of the ultimate reconciliation by the perfect sacrifice. Thus the Jewish worship is at once separative and figurative or typical. It is separative, by tracing in the most marked and absolute manner the line of demarcation between the sacred and the profane; it is figurative, by constantly pointing men's eyes onward, through all its types, to the great realisations of the future.

It is easy to understand how widely the worship of the Christian differs in its essence alike from that of Pagan or Jew. The God of this spiritual worship is above the world. His history, or, to speak more properly, the history of the sovereign manifestations of His working, is pre-eminently spiritual; it is not possible to reproduce it by a sort of scenic symbolism, as the facts of

nature were reproduced in the mysteries of Isis or of Ceres. Moreover, Christianity, recognising the liberty and power of God, who is a Spirit, repudiates all confidence in the secret forces of nature, and is altogether opposed to magic and its deceptive arts. The complicated ritual of the purely national paganism of Rome, which makes religion a thing of minute observances, is no less contrary to Christianity, which seeks only the living and spiritual union of the soul with God.

More nearly related to Judaism, which was the direct preparation for it, the Christian worship nevertheless differs from it in most essential features. It could not maintain the separative character of Judaism without belying itself. As the religion which proclaims a redemption no longer promised and typified, but accomplished, it cannot perpetuate institutions the object of which was to awaken and sustain in man the sense of his condemnation and separation from God. The system which brought into prominence the pollution of man's existence, by setting apart a holy place for worship, holy days, and a holy caste, must needs disappear when the Cross had wrought a full redemption for the race, and the great reconciliation was no longer a promise but a fact. Comprehensiveness is, then, an esential element of Christian worship. In its second function, as a figurative and typical system, "the shadow of good things to come," the Jewish worship of necessity becomes obsolete at the advent of Christianity.

Redemption no longer needs to be prefigured in a symbolic ritual; it is an accomplished fact, a present reality, to be apprehended and grasped first by means of teaching, which occupies a large and important part

in this dispensation of the Spirit, and then by the very act of worship. The material sacrifice, ever incomplete, has no longer any place in Christian worship. The blood of bulls and of goats, which was prophetic of a nobler sacrifice, no longer flows to revive the longing for purification, and to render it more intense by failing to satisfy it, since now the great Offering has been made once for all. The believing soul has henceforward nothing to do but to appropriate that sacrifice, or rather to identify itself by a true and spiritual union with that sacred Victim, presenting itself a living sacrifice.

From these considerations it follows further that Christian worship cannot be either the celebration of a mystery, or a magical process as in the religion of nature, nor a formal ritualism as at Rome. Nor can it consist, like the Jewish worship, in isolated acts of the life, distinct and exceptional, nor in a sacrifice at once material and typical. As the expression of faith in a finished redemption, it manifests this faith by word, and by very simple rites which bring home to the heart the spiritual reality. Its basis is teaching, its topstone is prayer, which is a spiritual sacrifice no less than an act of worship, and which is offered sometimes in singing, sometimes in supplication. Prayer is the soul of the sacrament, which gives visible form and consecration to the spiritual fact, and makes it to the worshipper intensely real.

Worship thus conceived is only the concentration of the habitual religious life; it is its blossom, its condensed expression; but the one draws its life from the other, and could not be parted from it without falling

back into the old Jewish system of separating the sacred and the profane. It has no fixed forms: while its essential principles are maintained, it matters little what may be the diversities of Christian symbolism, varying with the age, nationality, and degree of culture. It may be celebrated within the humble limits of one upper room, or may enrol in its service all the appliances of high art in a brilliant and advanced state of civilisation; provided only that it never becomes a *divina commedia*, a sort of scenic travesty of the gospel; provided that it never degrades itself to a materialistic ritualism, that it never draws again the old line of division between sacred and profane—as if the piety of one day could stand in the stead of every-day holiness; never re-establishes a priesthood and material sacrifice — vain shadows for those who possess the Divine reality; provided, in a word, that the worship be not pagan nor Jewish, but Christian.

We have seen that Christian worship preserved its character of high spirituality throughout the whole of the apostolic age. That which no doubt contributed to its maintenance was the fact that the Christian Churches gathered out of Judaism never separated themselves from the worship of the temple till the time of its overthrow at the siege of Jerusalem, and continued to observe all the customs of the religion of their fathers with its solemn forms. The craving for an artistic symbolism, which plays an important part in the worship, especially of Oriental races, thus found adequate satisfaction, and the creation of new forms distinctively Christian was delayed. The Churches of the Gentiles were in open reaction against the idolatrous rites of paganism,

and were more disposed to dispense with ceremonies than to multiply them. It would be unreasonable then to seek, in the Christianity of the first century, a perfect type of worship which should be binding on the Church of the future. We are bound to recognise the exceptional conditions which hindered any development of ritual. The Church of later days was free to modify and to multiply the observances of the primitive Church, provided only she adhered to the true spirit of its worship.

That which strikes us in this primitive worship is the marvellous boldness of its spirituality. It is not limited by any outward conditions of time, place, or form. It is the spontaneous expression of the religious life in its continuity. Luke gives us some idea of this when he says of the Christians at Jerusalem that they "continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." * The teaching of the apostles might be heard at any hour, in the public squares, in the temple, or in the upper chamber—that humble sanctuary of the new-born Church. Prayers, fervent and free, rose as the voice of the whole assembly, in times of danger, dread, or deliverance.

The reality of the Christian brotherhood was manifested by the community of goods and by the free-will offerings laid at the feet of the apostles, in order that the abundance of the rich might cover the needs of the poor. Every Christian house was a place of worship, every meal rose to the elevation of a Christian sacrament. Whenever bread was broken, there was remembrance of the broken body of the great Sacrifice, and

* Acts ii. 42.

the song of thanksgiving. The Christian worship thus blended with the entire life, transforming and purifying the whole. The ordinary was lifted to the level of the sublime, while the Church thus pitched her tent upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

The Christian Churches composed of Gentile converts exhibited the same great features as the Church of Jerusalem, but as they were completely set free from Jewish ritual, and were consequently obliged to find the satisfaction of all their needs in their own worship, this naturally assumed with them a more complete organisation. This is manifest from the letters of Paul to the Christians of Corinth and Thessalonica, who were tempted to indulge in a life of religious ecstasy. The fundamental principle of the Christian life is liberty. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." * But this liberty is a very different thing from license. All things must be done "decently and in order." † The apostle would not have this sacred liberty made by any the pretext for the indulgence of spiritual vagaries under the name of inspiration. Yet he would have absolute freedom in the service of God. No day, no place, no act of ordinary life should be excluded from it. No one may be condemned for observing a feast day or a Sabbath. ‡ The simplest acts may receive a sacred character. Whether men eat, or drink, or whatever they do, it may be done to the glory of God and with thanksgiving, thus making a Eucharist of every meal. Worship is celebrated sometimes at the river-side, as at Philippi; sometimes on the sea-shore, as at Miletus; sometimes in a Christian house or in a school of rhetoric, as at Corinth. The name *Church* is never given to a build-

* 2 Cor. iii. 17. † 1 Cor. xiv. 40. ‡ Col. ii. 16.

ing; it always designates a society of Christian souls, who build up the spiritual temple of which they are the living stones. Every believer is himself a sanctuary of the Spirit. This is the true house of God, unrivalled in beauty by the grandest cathedral.* There is perfect liberty of teaching, for each one has the right to lift up his voice for the glory of God, only being careful not to violate good order, and to recognise the sovereignty of God in the distribution of various gifts for the edification of the Church.† There is equal freedom in the service of song and of prayer. If any one has a prayer or a psalm, let him speak. ‡ The president of the assembly must be very careful not to quench the Spirit.§ The celebration of the Lord's Supper underwent a gradual change. It ceased to be the accompaniment of every meal, and became especially associated with the Agape, which was the evening meal supplied by the voluntary gifts of the Church, at which all the Christians, poor and rich, assembled. The Lord's Supper concluded this repast of the brotherhood, bringing to mind the great sacrifice of love.‖ The Church presents herself to God in prayer as a living sacrifice. Everything is spiritual and real in this crowning act of the Christian life, which has no analogy with the imperfect sacrifices of the Old Covenant. It is no repetition of that which was consummated on the cross. A perfect sacrifice has been offered once for all, according to the powerful utterances of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which there breathes the purest spirit of primitive Christianity.¶ The Christian

* Eph. ii. 20–22; 1 Cor. iii. 16; 1 Peter ii. 5.
† 1 Cor. xiv. 31.
‡ Ibid. xiv. 26.
§ 1 Thess. v. 19.
‖ 1 Cor. xi. 20, 23.
¶ Heb. x. 11, 15.

soul is at once the temple, the altar, and the sacrifice :* it presents itself to God at all times and in all places, and the free and spiritual worship we have described is but the concentrated and solemn expression of the piety of every day.

We have shown in the earlier part of this history that an important change was introduced into Christian worship at the commencement of the second century. This change was due mainly to the decree by which Pliny the Younger, during his proconsulate of Bithynia, prohibited the Christians from anything at all resembling those secret associations which the Roman authority everywhere sternly proscribed as a public danger.† The Church, in consequence of this prohibition, ceased to celebrate the Lord's Supper at the close of the evening meal, and thus its connection was broken with the Agape, of which it had till then been the complement. The Eucharist was transferred to the morning service, of which it became an integral part, the centre and the crown. It lost something of its primitive simplicity, for it ceased to recal so directly the supper of the Lord, and became the true Christian mystery in the lofty and profound sense of that word. We gather also from Pliny's letter that public worship had now assumed a more distinct and solemn character than at first, when it scarcely differed from the devotions in the home. It was now regulated with more care in the order of service, which consisted of the reading of the Scriptures and teaching, alternated with hymns, and

* Rom. xv. 16; 1 Peter ii. 5. See the fuller description of Christian worship, in Vol. i. of this History. "The Apostolic Age," pp. 329–334.

† "Secundum mandata tua Hetærias esse vetueram." Pliny, "Ep." lib. x. c. 97.

concluding with the Lord's Supper. Although there were devotions every day in the early morning, the Sunday worship seems to have been marked by peculiar solemnity. It still, however, long preserved the essential features to which it owed its high spirituality. These were not materially altered till the close of the following century.

In the first place, it remained faithful through the whole of this period to that great principle of universalism which was in marked contrast to the Jewish separatism, and which, regarding the whole Church as a people of priests and kings, made the whole life one unbroken act of service to God. As we have seen that in the ecclesiastical organisation, the bishop or priest was content to represent the community without claiming for himself any peculiar character which should separate him from his brethren, so public worship is as yet but the simple concentration of daily and homely piety. Sunday, as the first day of the week, inaugurates and represents all the rest, without claiming any peculiar inherent sanctity. The house of prayer is only the sanctuary of the home enlarged so as to contain the whole Christian assembly. The symbolical element receives a fuller development, and rises to true poetical beauty in the sacrament of baptism; but the thing signified is never lost in the sign, the true idea radiates through the transparent medium. Especial care is taken not to transform the simple ceremonial of Christian worship into a sort of magic, which is nothing better than a pietistic materialism. The supernatural order, which has its highest manifestation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is closely associated with the

natural; grace and nature seem here to meet and melt into each other. The bread and the wine of the Eucharist are at once the first-fruits of creation, the pledges of the creative love which bestows on man the good things of the earth, and the sacred types of redeeming love, the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. Thus, in the Lord's Supper, the elements of creation appear to us sanctified and purified, as in normal piety the natural life is raised from its defilement and condemnation. The dualism which characterises all false religions, because of their powerlessness to overcome the evil in nature and to infuse into it a Divine life, thus finds no place in the Eucharist any more than in any other part of the worship of the Church. Nowhere do we find a trenchant opposition between the sacred and the profane, between nature and grace, not even in the solemn hours of worship. Hence the eucharistic prayer never fails, as we shall show, to unite in one act of thanksgiving both the natural and supernatural gifts of God—the bountiful providence which makes the harvest ripen, and the gracious forgiveness with which the prodigal is welcomed home.

The more closely purified nature and the order of grace are associated, the more marked will be the contrast between unregenerate nature and the Church. While the Church remained faithful to her true principles, she excluded from her midst by a firm discipline the unbelievers who accepted neither her doctrine nor her morality. The convenient system which opens the doors of the Church unconditionally to a worldly and impenitent crowd, is as contrary to the true spirit of Christianity as is the separatism which makes the

religious life an exception, a class privilege. The Church not only protected herself against the intrusion of a mixed multitude by the severity of the discipline which was exercised towards new converts and those who had proved themselves deceivers or self-deceived, but also by the care with which she guarded her worship from all profanation. Even at the time when the Eucharist was still celebrated in public, the Church strictly excluded from participation, all who had not given the most solemn pledges of their faith. She did not long remain content with these precautions, and from the close of the second century we find that after the first part of the service, not only the unworthy and the impenitent, but also the catechumens who were preparing for Church membership, were required to leave the sanctuary. Holy things for the holy: such is the inflexible rule of Christian worship in this age of fervent spirituality. So far from there being any contradiction between the breadth of spirit on which we have dwelt and these severe restrictions, this apparent narrowness is the very condition of the stalwart spirituality which requires the concentration of the whole life, not merely the performance of exceptional and isolated acts. Christianity can only abolish the distinction between the sacred and the profane, when it has already consecrated the entire life. Worship can only be the epitome of a life which is itself holy. As soon as unconverted multitudes are admitted into the Church, worship becomes of necessity more and more separate from ordinary life, and assumes an exceptional character. The restoration of sacred days, holy places, and an august ceremonial, is but another step in the

same direction. There is no other way in which the Church can preserve its spirituality than by being severely exclusive towards all that is opposed to its true life.

We must call attention to one more trait characteristic of this great era; we refer to the absence of an elaborate and inflexible ritual—the freedom of the order of service. This is not left indeed to mere caprice, its outline is firmly drawn, but there is as yet no imposition of exact formularies and invariable liturgies. Prayer preserves its spontaneity, free expression is allowed to the aspirations of the Christian soul. It is only later that this free utterance becomes fettered. It is a patent fact that the progress of liturgical worship has coincided with that of the hierarchy.

CHAPTER II.

WORSHIP IN THE HOME.

In the true conception of Christian worship as we have endeavoured to represent it, domestic piety holds a place of primary importance, for it is the condition, the basis of public worship, which is intended not to be a substitute for it, but only to give it fuller expression. Like the stream which receives into its broad bosom all the rivulets from the hills, so public worship blends in one common adoration all the highest aspirations of separate souls. Every Christian solemnity which does not carry out this idea is a delusion, and its certain result will be to lend a fictitious character to the religious life itself. If then we would estimate at its true value the worship of the Church in the second and third centuries, we must make ourselves familiar with the home life of the Christians of that day, and ascertain how their religion entered into their domestic habits.

It is certain, in the first place, that private worship was no more a thing apart from everyday life, than public worship was divorced from domestic piety. The whole life of the Christian was consecrated by private devotion, as this in its turn found its strength renewed and concentrated by united worship. The service of God comprehended all the hours and sanctified all the

occupations of a various and busy life, and the moments devoted specially to prayer were intended merely to sustain the inspiration of the whole.

The essential act of worship, whether public or private, is prayer. It is this which breaks down the barrier between heaven and earth, and by bearing our requests and longings, our worship and thanksgiving, to God, and bringing down from Him all the gifts necessary to our religious life, and first of all the great gift of Himself, makes the union between the soul and God a living and personal reality. The Church of this age had a true estimate of the privilege of prayer, and of the holy warfare implied in it. The most illustrious Christian teachers—Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian—wrote special treatises on prayer. They give us an exalted idea of it in its primitive simplicity, as the cry of the Christian soul for Divine aid for itself and others. These treatises refer for the most part to private and domestic devotion. The prayers of the Church in which we find the first traces of a liturgy which as yet was compatible with much liberty of utterance, are treated separately. We have this valuable documentary authority as to what were considered the essential conditions of private worship in Christian homes.

We find, first, that prayer demands the concentration of thought upon its object. "How should God hear thee, if thou hearest not thyself?" says Cyprian. The priest in the house, like the priest in the church, must say to himself, *Sursum corda.** Prayer has shared in that great change which characterises all worship under the New Covenant.† It is borne upwards into the

* Cyprian, "De orat. domin." c. 31. † Tertullian, "De orat." c. 1.

presence of God Himself by the heavenly words taught us by the Master's own lips, and which comprise in their sublime simplicity the loftiest conceptions. Prayer rises from the hidden sanctuary of the humble cottage made glorious by the Divine presence.* Prayer is not a Mount of Transfiguration, to be climbed only at certain hours, while for the rest of their time men are content to grovel in the dust of worldliness. It has no value except when it is the condensed expression of the whole life. Hence the importance of the moral attitude of the soul that comes to God in prayer. Obedience alone can make prayer acceptable.† Now the first commandment of God is love. Hence Tertullian says, "Do we suppose that we can approach the God of peace without being ourselves men of peace? Can we ask for forgiveness of sin with our own hearts full of hatred? How can the Father, who condemns anger, receive us if He sees us full of spleen against our brother? It is not only anger that the Christian man should abjure, but everything that may hinder his prayers. He should breathe a spirit in harmony with Him into whose presence He comes. The God whose Spirit is holiness and joy and liberty, cannot receive a soul defiled, angry, or enslaved. Opposites cannot meet; without sympathy no relation is possible."‡ Cain will always see his offering rejected while Abel's is accepted. God does not look so much at the offering as at the heart that brings it.§ It is in

* "Dei omnipotentis et conspectum auditum sub tectis et in abditis." Tertullian, "De orat." c. 1.

† "Memoria præceptorum viam orationibus sternit ad cœlum." Ibid. 10.

‡ "Nemo nisi comparem suum admittat." Ibid." 10.

§ "Neque munera, sed corda Deus intuebatur." Cyprian, "De orat. domin." 24.

truth only the heart He asks. Prayer is the true sacrifice of the New Covenant, acceptable whenever it rises from a loving and renewed soul. "Here," says Tertullian, "is the spiritual offering which does away with the ancient sacrifices.* The hour is come when God is worshipped in spirit and in truth, for He is a Spirit, and seeketh such to worship Him. We who worship Him in spirit, and offer Him the prayer which He Himself has chosen and appointed, we are His true worshippers, His true priests. The prayer which rises from a fervent heart, a prayer which is sustained by faith and purified by the truth, ascends innocent and pure; love crowns it, good works form its triumphant escort to the altar of God, where it is sure to find full acceptance."† It is impossible to measure its power. It was prayer like this which quenched the fire into which the three Hebrews had been thrown, stopped the mouths of lions, brought food from heaven for the famished, made the plenteous rain descend from skies of brass, put to flight armies of aliens; and above all made the Christian strong to bear trials of cruel mockings, imprisonment, and death, for the name of his God. Rising to a yet sublimer sphere, prayer disarms the righteous wrath of God, and covers as with a shield even the persecutors of the Church, for prayer alone can conquer God.‡ Christ has given to prayer no power for evil, but He has made it almighty for good; hence its blessed function is to dispense consolation and salvation, to repel temptation, to sustain the weak, to feed the

* "Hæc est enim hostia spiritalis, quæ pristina sacrificia delevit." Tertullian, "De orat." 23. † Ibid.

‡ "Sola est oratio quæ Deum vincit." Ibid. 24.

poor, to abase the rich, to raise the fallen, to give firmness to the wavering, and to strengthen such as do stand. Prayer is the wall of faith and the armour of the Christian against his deadly foe. Let us never lay aside this panoply, and let us guard the standard of our captain under arms of prayer, awaiting the trumpet of the angel."*

We see, then, how the efficacy of prayer stands in exact relation to the moral life of the Christian. If it be not the solemn expression of that life, it is of no more value than a tinkling cymbal. According to Origen, he prays without ceasing who closely unites both working and praying. The only way in which it is possible to understand the apostolic precept, "Pray without ceasing," is to regard the life of the Christian as one great act of continuous prayer.† Prayer, according to Clement of Alexandria, is in truth life with God. When we only move our lips, or even when without the lips our soul speaks silently to God, the inarticulate cry reaches His ear, for He knows afar off the thought of the heart that is yearning after Him.‡ Prayer thus understood is not limited to time or place, still less to any set form of expression. Wherever the Christian may be, walking by the way or sitting in the house, in solitude or conversing with brethren, reading, working, or resting, he ceases not to pray. It is enough that in the secret sanctuary of the soul his thoughts are Godward, and his desires reach after Him; the Father

* Tertullian, "De orat." 24. † Origen, "De orat." 22.

‡ Ἔξεστιν οὖν μηδὲ φωνῇ τὴν εὐχὴν παραπέμπειν, μόνον δ' ἐνδοθεν. Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." vii. 7, 43. Ἔστιν οὖν ὡς εἰπεῖν τολμηρότερον ὁμιλία πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἡ εὐχή. Ibid. 39.

who seeth in secret is near, and anticipates his request.*

If prayer thus conceived is, as it were, the grand harmony of the Christian soul, the key-note of the religious life, it is no less necessary that it find utterance in distinct petitions. The Lord's Prayer remains for ever the one perfect model, the summary of the whole gospel.† Hence the great theologians who have written on prayer have delighted to dwell upon this theme.

They regard it rather as an outline and model of what daily prayer should be, than as a sacred formulary to be repeated as if the words had in them some magic charm. Undoubtedly the prayer which addresses the Father in the very words of his own Son must be peculiarly dear to Him. The Master, who foresaw all our human needs, gave us in the Lord's Prayer an example of the manner and the spirit in which we might make known to God all the petitions arising out of the varied necessities of our lives.‡

But there is something far more acceptable to God than the mere repetition of any number of "Paternosters," namely, the translation of this prayer of our Lord into the daily life of the Christian. "Let us beware," said the great Alexandrine, "of thinking that the Master intended to teach us to repeat certain formularies of prayer. Let us rather use this prayer, 'Our Father who art in heaven,' in the spirit of the precept which enjoins us to pray always. This we shall do by leading a life not grovelling on the earth, but reaching ever heavenward, and by becoming ourselves dwelling-

* Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." vii. 7, 36.
† "Breviarium totius Evangelii." Tertull. "De orat." 1. ‡ Ibid. 9.

places of God, for the kingdom of God is set up in all those who bear the image of the Lord from heaven, and who thus partake His nature."* The Church in the time of Cyprian seems to have attached more value to the exact words of the Lord's Prayer. "Let the Father," says Cyprian, "recognise the words of His Son when we pray."† He was nevertheless faithful to the spirit of his glorious predecessors in declaring that the Christian can pray at any moment and in any place. "God has specially enjoined on us," he says, "to pray in secret, in retired places, in the most secluded corners of our homes, in order that we may realise the fact of His universal presence, that He sees and hears each one of us, and that He fills with the fulness of His glory the darkest place."‡ The reference here is clearly to private worship in the abode of the Christian.

Although this spiritual worship really comprises the entire life, it is very needful that there should be certain times set apart for prayer. Jesus Christ, whose holy life was ever in God, yet sought solitude every day, in order to pour out his soul in prayer. How much more necessary must such retirement be for the disciple, accessible to so many temptations.§ Prayer must open and close each day.‖ Besides this morning and evening devotion, three hours appear to have been specially consecrated to prayer in the course of the day—the third,

* Μὴ λέξεις τοίνυν νομίσωμεν διδάσκεσθαι λέγειν ἡμᾶς ἔν τινι ἀποτεταγμένῳ τε εὔχεσθαι καιρῷ. Πᾶς ἡμῶν ὁ βιος ἀδιαλείπτως προσευχομένων λέγετω τὸ πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. Origen, "De orat." 22.

† "Agnoscat pater et filii sui verba." Cyprian, "De orat. domin." 3.

‡ "In cubiculis ipsis, ut sciamus Deum ubique esse præsentem." Cyprian, "De orat. domin." 4.

§ "Ipse fuit secedens in solitudinem et adorans." Ibid. 29.

‖ "Mane orandum est, recedente item sole." Ibid. 35.

sixth, and ninth hours.* These were already pointed out by Old Testament tradition, and the early Christians connected with them other sacred memories of gospel story. It was at the third hour that the Pentecostal fire had fallen upon the heads of the worshippers at Jerusalem. It was at the sixth hour that Peter had been honoured at Joppa with the vision which had enlarged his ideas of the introduction of Gentiles into the Church. It was at the ninth hour that he and John had wrought their first miracle at the Beautiful gate of the Temple.

Towards the end of the third century the Church sought to associate the special hours of prayer with the memories of the Passion of the Saviour; at least so we gather from the "Apostolical Constitutions." First of all, the faithful are exhorted to lift up their souls to God on waking, to prepare themselves thus for the toil of the day.† At the third hour let them pray, for then their Master was stretched on the accursed tree. The sixth hour recals the darkness which was over all the earth during His fearful agony. At the ninth hour His side was pierced with the soldier's spear.‡ Prayer must be offered again before seeking rest at night.§ The night itself is not to be passed without prayer. "Rise at midnight and pray, for at this hour all creation in silence blesses God."‖ There is a sublime prayer for the Christian in the majestic silence of the starry night. He seems to hear a solemn hymn that does not

* Tertullian, "De orat." 20.

† Πιστοὶ πάντες ἐγερθέντες πρὸ τοῦ ἔργον ἐπιτελέσαι προσευχέσθωσαν. "Const. Egypt." ii. 57. ‡ "Const. Egypt." ii. 62. § Ibid.

‖ "Οτι ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις σίγᾷ εὐλογοῦσα Θεὸν. Ibid. Πολλάκις καὶ τῆς νυκτὸς ἀνεγερτέον τῆς κοίτης καὶ τὸν Θεὸν εὐλογητέον. Clement of Alexandria, "Pædag." ii. 9, 79.

reach the outward ear, in which stars, woods, hills, angels, and redeemed souls all unite in praising God Almighty. It is but right that the prayer of the believing heart should take up the wondrous chant. Is it not at midnight that the Bridegroom's voice is to be heard, calling the wise virgins to the marriage of the great King? Let the cock-crow find the Christian awake, to bless Him who rises as the Sun of Righteousness upon our night, and to pray for grace that he may not imitate the faithless disciple whose treachery is for ever associated with that morning call.

Thus does the Christian, according to the most ancient precept of the "Apostolical Constitutions," make his whole life a memorial of Christ.*

A certain degree of importance was attached to the attitude suitable in prayer. It was not permissible to remain seated. The most frequent practice was to kneel, except on Sunday, when an erect position was preferred, in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ.† The hands and eyes were to be lifted heavenward.‡ The numerous *Orantes* of the catacombs give us a vivid representation of prayer in its most solemn form. The attitude, however, derives its value entirely from the sentiment it is intended to express. "Before raising the hands and eyes to heaven," says Origen, "the soul must be directed heavenward. It is certain that of all the various attitudes of the body the most becoming in prayer is that in which the hands and eyes are lifted

* Μνείαν ποιοῦντες τοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε. "Const. Apost." ii. 62.

† "Die dominico jejunium nefas ducimus, vel de geniculis adorare." Tertullian, "De cor. milit." 3.

‡ "Nos vero non attollimus tantum, sed etiam expandimus manus." Tertullian, "De orat." 11.

in token of the inward uplifting of the heart. It is well to conform to this custom, except when lawfully prevented, as by sickness, when prayer may be offered sitting or reclining. There are also other circumstances which may arise, in travelling for example, in which it may not be possible to adopt the usual posture, and prayer may then be offered without any outward sign indicative of it. Let it be remembered that the kneeling posture enjoined for the confession of sins has no other value than as a symbol of a humble and contrite heart.* The true model of Christian prayer for all ages is the publican of the parable smiting on his breast and crying for pardon to the God whom he has offended.† It is well not to raise the voice in prayer, but to be satisfied with the secret language of a penitent heart, like Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Has not St. Paul said that the groanings of the spirit in the heart of the Christian cannot be uttered? God hears not the voice but the desire."‡

Reading and meditation on the Scriptures form an important part of private worship. Prayer is regarded as the key which unlocks the Divine treasure. "Nothing is more necessary than prayer for the right understanding of Divine things," says Origen to one of his beloved disciples.§

We have hitherto been considering especially individual prayer. This is in itself sufficient to enlarge the Christian soul and to raise it above selfish prejudices. In prayer the soul approaches God as a priest, bearing

* Origen, "De orat." 31. † Cyprian, "De orat. domin." 6.
‡ "Deus non vocis sed cordis auditor est." Ibid. 4.
§ Origen, "Ep. ad. Gregor. Thaumat."

to Him not only its own burdens, but the sorrows and needs also of humanity and of the Church.

"The Prince of peace," says Cyprian, "the one Lord of all, would not that prayer should be marked by any isolation of ourselves from our fellows, so that we should pray for ourselves alone. He did not teach us to say, 'My Father who art in heaven, give *me* *my* daily bread, forgive *my* trespasses.' Prayer must have a wider scope; it includes the whole community, and when we pray it is not for one Christian only, but for the whole people of God, because we are one with that people. The God of peace and *of* love, who has taught us that we are all one, would have each pray for all, since the one is as it were bearing all in his own person."* Thus prayer expands like the stream from the hidden spring, spreading its waters of blessing far and near; it is in itself a spiritual communion, as is indicated by the sublime plural in the Lord's Prayer. It is natural, then, that before finding its full manifestation in the great Christian assemblies, this community of prayer should be realised in the smaller community of the family.

Does not every Christian dwelling become a sanctuary from the moment it opens its gates to the invisible Guest? We have already quoted the beautiful words of Clement of Alexandria, in which he represents father, mother, and child as finding in their united prayer the fulfilment of the Divine promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name,

* "Publica est nobis et communis oratio, et quando oramus, non pro uno, sed pro toto populo oramus, quia totus populus unum sumus." Cyprian, "De orat. domin." 8.

there am I in the midst of them."* Marriage, so far from being an obstacle to piety, is sanctified by it. "If thou hast a wife," says the "Coptic Constitution," "pray with her."† Let the conjugal union be no obstacle to prayer, for it in no way sullies our purity, since those who have been washed in the redeeming blood have no need to be washed again. They are sanctified and purified.‡ Husbands and wives ought to study the Scriptures as well as to pray together, especially when they are prevented from attending public worship.§ All the commonest acts of life are elevated and consecrated by prayer. Heavenly things should take the precedence of the earthly, and it is more important to take care of the soul than of the body. The Christian was bound to pray before repairing to the public baths.‖ The blessing before meals was strictly enjoined. In the Jewish religion the head of the family performed a truly sacerdotal act when he blessed God on Easter Day at the moment of eating the Paschal lamb. This sacred memory was to be recalled to his mind whenever he offered his simple thanksgiving to heaven at the family table, around which his wife and children gathered for their ordinary meals. The Lord's Prayer teaches us to make direct request to God for our daily bread, as though He Himself broke it to us with His own hands. Hence it becomes us to bless Him every day for this gift of

* Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." iii, 10, 68.

† *Εἰ δὲ γυναῖκα ἔχεις, ἅμα προρεύχεσθε.* "Const. Egypt." x. 62.

‡ *Σὺ δὲ ὁ γάμῳ δεδεμένος, μὴ κωλύου προσεύχισθαι, οὐ γὰρ ἀκάθαρτοί ἐστε.* Ibid. ii. 62; comp. John xiii. 10.

§ *Εὐχῆς καί ἀναγνώσεως καιρός.* Clement of Alexandria, "Pædag." ii. 10, 96. *Ἐν δὲ ἡμέρᾳ ᾗ κατήχησις οὐ γίνεται οἶκοι ἕκαστος ἅγιον βιβλίον λαβὼν ἀναγινωσκέτο ἱκανῶς τὰ συμφέρειν δοκοῦντα.* "Const. Egypt." ii. 62.

‖ "Sed et cibum non prius sumere et lavacrum non prius adire, quam interposita oratione, fideles decet." Tertullian, "De orat." 20.

His providence which makes us daily guests at His table. The gospel shows us Jesus Christ raising His eyes to heavens to return thanks to His Father, before satisfying the multitudes assembled around Him. All the food we eat is, according to St. Paul, created of God to be received with thanksgiving; and thus forms a part of the great Eucharist of the Christian life.* Thus regarded, every meal assumes in a manner a sacramental character, and we can well understand how the Lord's Supper should have been in primitive times connected with it. Thus the Fathers of the second and third centuries rightly lay much stress on the necessity of consecrating every common meal by prayer. Clement of Alexandria even suggests that a hymn be sung when the wine is taken, and does not hesitate to call the meal of a Christian household a Eucharist.†

The song of praise to God was heard round the domestic hearth no less than in the church. After reading the Scriptures, the family joined in common prayer and sang their morning hymn of praise, after which the father, mother, and children exchanged the kiss of peace, and all betook themselves to the duties of the day.‡ In the evening the same simple rites were observed, and in the darkness of the night fresh hallelujahs rose from fervent hearts to the Father in heaven. Two of the ancient hymns sung by Christian families in

* Βρωμάτων ἃ ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισεν εἰς μετάλημψιν μετὰ εὐχαριστίας τοῖς πιστοῖς. 1 Tim. iv. 3.

† Ὡς εἶναι τὴν δικαίαν τροφὴν εὐχαριστίαν. Clement of Alexandria, "Pædag." ii. 1, 10.

‡ "Diligentiores in orando subjungere in orationibus alleluia solent." Tertullian, "De orat." 22. "Quæ oratio cum divortio sancti osculi integra?" Ibid. 14.

the first days of the Church have come down to us. Their form denotes that they were intended rather for private than for public worship.

MORNING HYMN.

Day by day will I bless Thee,
And will praise Thy name for ever,
And from age to age.
Vouchsafe, O Lord, that we may be kept this day also without sin.
Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and Thy name is to be praised and glorified for ever.
Amen.

EVENING HYMN.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord: teach me Thy judgments.
O Lord, Thou hast been a refuge to us from generation to generation.
Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us.
Thou hast healed my soul [in] that I have sinned against Thee.
O Lord, to Thee I flee for refuge.
Teach me to do Thy will,
Because Thou art my God;
Because Thou art the fountain of life.
In Thy light shall we see light.
Extend Thy mercy to them that know Thee.*

A third, which might be called the Twilight Hymn, seems also adapted for use in the family no less than in the Church. We offer a literal rendering of it.

Calm light of the celestial glory,
O Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father,
We come to Thee now as the sun goes down,
And before the evening light

* These two hymns have come down to us in a double form, as adapted to be used by individuals or in the church. See Bunsen, "Analecta Antenicæna," vol. iii. pp. 88, 89. We have given the former only as illustrating our present subject.

We seek Thee, Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit of God.
Thou art worthy to be for ever praised by
holy voices.
O Son of God, Thou givest life to us,
And therefore does the world glorify Thee.

The same principle which regulated the daily acts of devotion governed the whole week. Each day was associated with the commemoration of the Passion of the Lord, except Saturday, which was celebrated in a special manner as the Sabbath of the Old Covenant, but with less solemnity than the Lord's Day. The custom of fasting on Wednesday, in remembrance of the treachery of Judas, and on Friday, as the day of the crucifixion, was established at a very early period, though we cannot ascertain the exact date of its commencement. We do know, however, that it was not in the first instance regarded as obligatory.* The great festivals of the Christian year were celebrated by public worship as well as in the family. The Lord's Day was specially commemorative of the joy of the resurrection; thus the Christians prayed that day in a standing position, both at their domestic altar and in the house of prayer.

All images were strictly prohibited in the sacred edifices, but the Christians were permitted to engrave upon their cups and seals symbols of their faith, such as the Good Shepherd, the anchor, the palm, the mystic fish, the vessel, and other emblems.†

One of the most beautiful customs of this age was

* Tertullian, "De orat." 14.

† Αἱ δὲ σφραγῖδες ἡμῖν ἔστωσαν πελειὰς ἢ ἰχθὺς ἢ ναῦς. Clement of Alexandria, "Pædag." iii. 11, 59.

to consecrate by prayer the hospitality freely offered in Christian homes. Tertullian says: "Do not allow a brother to cross thy threshold without praying with him.* Has he not a right to say to his host: 'Thou hast in me a brother: nay, more, I represent Jesus Christ, who lives in His people'? Who knows if the stranger thou receivest may not be a hidden angel of God? He will esteem the heavenly benediction more than all that a generous hospitality can offer to renew his strength. Without that he would suppose himself under the roof of a heathen living without God and without hope. How could he say, as the Lord commands, 'Peace be to this house,' if the same blessing had not been invoked on his own head by prayer?" †

What consolation must have come to the heart of the Christian exile or traveller in these simple homes, which were so generously opened to him, alike in the great centres of paganism, where he must have felt terribly alone in the midst of the profane orgies of the city, or in the heart of some benighted village. Family worship was celebrated in these Christian households under the simplest forms, but with as much solemnity as in the great assemblies. What could be more beautiful than the morning and evening worship, when mother, children, and servants were all gathered around the father, the true priest of the house? The Word of life was read as devoutly in the family circle as in the public sanctuary. Prayer did not rise with more fervour from the lips of a bishop than from those of a lowly artisan. Not satisfied with express-

* "Fratrem domum tuam introgressum ne sine oratione dimiseris." Tertullian, "De orat." 21. † Ibid.

ing with childlike simplicity their own family needs and requests, he would bear up also before God His tried and suffering people, and intercede with Him for a lost and impenitent world. The song in which the voices of the little children joined, reached the ear of God no less acceptably than the sublime hymns of the Church. When the father had blessed the coarse food, served on the rustic table, around which strangers so often sat as welcome guests, it seemed like a renewal of the supper of the Lord when, as in the times of the primitive Church at Jerusalem, the apostles broke bread from house to house.

Sometimes the silence of night would be broken by the solemn voice of one crying at the hour when the Bridegroom had promised to come to call the faithful virgins, or as if in response to that great hymn of the night of which the Psalmist has given us the echo, and which Pythagoras, in his glorious dreams, heard vibrating through the spheres.

All these prayers of the day and of the night were but the articulate expression of the mute unceasing prayers which ascended as perfume from the entire life—the incense of that holiness which is, as Origen says, the very breath of a purified existence.

Such was domestic piety in the grand age of the early Church. Public worship was but the prolongation and expansion of this private devotion, from which alone it derived that character of reality and spirituality which is its distinctive mark.

CHAPTER III.

TIMES AND PLACES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

§ 1.—*The Lord's Day and the Christian Festivals.*

THE Church, as she went on rapidly growing through the extraordinary success of her missions, could not long content herself with mere private houses in which to celebrate her worship; she was constrained also to fix certain hours and days for public service, in order to gather together her members, scattered as they were over all quarters of great cities, and variously occupied in earning their bread. It was indeed expressly forbidden to any Christian so to indulge in mystical contemplation as to hinder his daily work. The Apostle Paul had already combated this dangerous tendency in the young Church of Thessalonica, which, under pretext of looking for the return of Christ, had abandoned itself to an indolent devoteeism, highly dangerous in every respect.* The Christians were therefore mixed up in the noisy activity of the great centres of ancient civilisation: public worship was only rendered possible under such conditions by the setting apart of certain places and of certain hours for the assembling of believers for prayer. It was also very important that Christians should have

* 2 Thess. iv. 10–12.

the opportunity of retiring sometimes from the deafening hum of worldliness in the midst of which they lived, that they might commune in silence with their God. We know that all places were holy to Him who said to the woman of Sychar, "The time shall come when ye shall neither on this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father;" and yet the Lord Himself sought the quiet mountain top for solitary communion with God. It needs no deep knowledge of psychology to explain the value of these intervals for prayer, in which the pilgrim heavenward shakes off for a few moments the dust from his feet, and refreshes himself in the contemplation of Divine things. Nor need there be any recurrence to the old Jewish ideas which attributed a character of exclusive sacredness to such days and places of devout repose. We are constrained to admit, however, that the descent is an easy one, and the decline of spirituality in the Church quickly led her back to the obsolete idea of another Sabbath and another temple, after the model of the Jewish, just as she fell again under the influences of a sacerdotalism which the gospel had really abrogated. She long preserved, however, the true conception of spiritual worship, unfettered by any outward condition.

Let us speak of the special days of worship, before directing our attention to the buildings first set apart for this purpose.

We have shown, in our exposition of the theology of the second and third centuries, that the early Church adhered faithfully to the principle laid down by St. Paul, who rejects the distinction of days, even so far as the observance of the Sabbath day, as a relic of the religion

of types and shadows. To the Christian there was neither new moon nor Sabbath day.* We have now to inquire if in practice the Church was true to this her theory.

We have observed, in speaking of private worship, that there was an attempt to make every day a memorial of Christ, and that the principal hours of prayer were associated with the great memories of His Passion. The same idea is thus expressed in the "Constitution of the Egyptian Church." "Be mindful ever of Jesus Christ." He presides over the Christian week and the Christian year. Thus the Christian is to walk with the Redeemer along the painful road to Calvary, before sharing in the glorious triumph of the third day. Wednesday and Friday were devoted to prayer and fasting, at least the latter part of the day. Public worship on these days was to have special reference to the scenes of the Passion. They were called the watch-days or sentry-days of the week, the figure being borrowed from military service. It signified a holy vigil of the Christian soul with the Saviour in His agony and Passion.‡ It is as though the Church would fulfil the task in which the feeble disciples failed, when they were overcome by slumber while their Master passed through His terrible conflict in Gethsemane; as though the Church was jealous that she might not deserve the tender yet poignant reproach which He addressed to the disciples at the close of His night of agony: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?"

* Col. ii. 16. † "Const. Egypt." ii. 62.

‡ The word we have translated *watch-day* occurs in "Pastor Hermas," iii; Simil. 5, 1. "Cur stationibus quartam et sextam Sabbati dicamus." Tertullian, "De jejun." 14. "Statio de militari exemplo nomen accepit." Ibid. "De orat." 14.

Sunday was from the commencement of the second century the great day of public worship. The testimony of Pliny the Younger is as decisive on this point as that of Justin Martyr and other Fathers of the same age.* Whatever importance may be attached to public worship on that day, it is not regarded as in any way a substitute for the Jewish Sabbath, nor is its observance connected with the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. There is no trace of any such idea in the writers of this age. Thus we find the seventh day kept as a feast, not only by the converts from Judaism but also by most of the Gentile Churches. At Rome the Friday fast was protracted through the hours of the Lord's entombment, and this extension was called the supplementary fast.† The Orientals, on the contrary, treated the Sabbath as a Christian festival, and observed the usual solemnities of worship. The Christians seem to have been led to attach some special observance to the Sabbath in opposition to the Gnostic Marcionites, who, in their vehement dualism, despised everything which had reference to the work of the six days and to the God of creation.‡ The coexistence of this Sabbath celebration and of the Lord's Day was in itself sufficient to save the early Church from that Jewish Sabbatarianism to which ignorance of history, and yet more, unfaithfulness to the great principles of Christianity, have too often given the ascendency in our day. Nothing can more clearly prove the absence of any such notion

* Pliny, "Ep." x. 96; Justin, "Apol." ii. 67; Tertullian, "De corona," 3; "De fuga in persecut." 14; "Apol." 16.

† Tertullian, "De jejun." 14. This Sabbath fast observed at Rome was called "Superpositio jejunii." Neander, "All. Gesch. der Christlich kirch." i. 340.

‡ Augustine, "Archæol." i. 515.

in Christian antiquity, than the unquestionable fact of the daily celebration of public worship with all solemnity in great metropolitan centres like Alexandria. We read in the "Constitutions of the Church of Egypt:" "Let all the faithful hasten in the morning, before they repair to their work, to the Church, where they will find the spirit of deliverance. Let each one partake of the eucharistic feast before receiving any other food."* Every day is thus alike sanctified. The holy mysteries are not restricted to Sunday. Sunday was to the other days what the bishop of this age was to his brethren, —simply *primus interpares*.

There is no apostolic decree or episcopal ordinance appointing the celebration of the first day of the week any more than the watch-days or the hours of private devotion. Sunday is the offspring of Christian liberty, not the inheritance of Jewish bondage. Deriving their strength and joy from the resurrection of their Master, the Christians delighted in celebrating this weekly day of remembrance. By a transition easy to understand, they associated the coming forth from the tomb of the Prince of light, with the story of the great day when at His word the first sun rose out of chaos as out of nature's tomb. They loved to associate in their gratitude the gifts of creation and the grace of redemption. The Lord's day commemorated this twofold working of the Creator and Saviour of the world.* Justin, after boldly declaring that the Christians were no Sabbatarians like the Jews, adds: "Our great assembly is held on the Lord's day, because that is the first day in which

* Πᾶς πιστὸς σπουδαζέτω εὐχαριστίας μεταλαβεῖν πρὸ τοῦ τινος ἄλλου γεύσασθαι. "Const. Egypt." ii. 58.

God brought forth the world out of darkness and chaos, and also because Jesus Christ our Saviour on that day came forth from the grave, having been crucified on the Friday; and on the morrow after the Saturday He appeared to the apostles and disciples and taught them that which we present to your meditation."* The free and generous spirit of Justin felt no scruple in calling the Lord's Day the day of the Sun, according to the custom of the ancient world, for, faithful to the principles of his "Apology," he gave to the appellation a new and suggestive sense. He recognised as a seed of the Word the partial truth which he discovered in paganism, while he endeavoured to give it an evangelical development. The more timid Christians avoided a designation which might give the pagans a pretext for calling them sun-worshippers.† They preferred to call Sunday the Lord's day, an expression already employed in the epistles ascribed to Ignatius.‡ Subsequently, however, the old name, Sunday, reappeared, and became current in most modern languages.

Everything was to make manifest the joy of the Christian on the day commemorative of the resurrection. He was not allowed to fast; he remained erect both in public and private prayer, indicating by this posture his fellowship in the triumph of the Prince of life. The Sunday worship, in which all the faithful united, was celebrated with peculiar solemnity. "On the Lord's day," run the "Apostolical Constitutions," in a passage which bears the marks of genuineness,

* Τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου λεγομένῃ ἡμέρᾳ κοινῇ πάντων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συνέλευσις γίνεται. Justin, "Apol." ii. 67. † Tertullian, "Apol." 16.

‡ "Const. Apost." ii. 47; viii. 33. Εἰς τὴν κυριακήν. Pseudo Ignat. "Ad Magnes." 9, 10.

"assemble yourselves to bless God and to celebrate the mercy He has shown you in Jesus Christ, in delivering you from slavery and error. Let your offering be pure and acceptable to God, who has said to His universal Church: 'In every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.'" *

There is no indication throughout the second century that the cessation of work was obligatory. The "Apostolical Constitutions" which enjoin it are of later date; they make it equally binding for the Sabbath, without referring in any way to the Mosaic law, and basing the injunction simply upon the necessities of worship.† Tertullian, who demands formally, at the commencement of the third century, the cessation of all Sunday work, does not allude to the rest into which the Creator entered on the seventh day; his only idea seems to be to secure the conditions favourable for meditation. The expressions which he uses indicate that what he urges is an innovation, likely to meet with very general objection. He says: "We should abstain on the day of the resurrection from all that might trouble or distract us, setting aside all business, so as to give no access to temptation."‡ Sunday was generally chosen for the adjustment of differences between Christians, before the elders of the Church. §

* "Const. Apost." vii. 30.

† *Διὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τῆς εὐσεβείας.* "Const. Apost." viii. 33.

‡ "Nos vero, sicut accepimus, solo die dominico resurrectionis omni anxietatis habitu et officio cavere debemus, differentes etiam negotia, ne quem diabolo locum demus." Tertullian, "De orat." 18.

§ "Const. Apost." ii. 47.

During a long period, the limit of which it is not easy to fix, in the second century, the Christians observed no other feast but the Lord's day. It was, however, to be foreseen that they would not adhere to this, but would apply to the year the principle which had determined the disposition of their days and weeks. We must not lose sight, moreover, of the influence exercised by the traditions of the Old Testament over the early Church, which would naturally be led to borrow some of the ancient solemnities, especially those which were great types of the redemption. Of all the Jewish feasts, there were two which were by anticipation Christian—the Passover and Pentecost. The Passover recalled at once the sacrifice of the true Paschal Lamb and the resurrection. It thus formed a close bond between the religion of promise and of fulfilment. The Alexandrine Jews, more subtle than their brethren in Palestine, delighted to see in it the symbol of the soul delivered from the captivity of sense, as from another Egypt; but this interpretation, however pleasing to a few philosophical minds, did not exclude the great commemoration of the resurrection. Pentecost, which was the feast of harvest in the Jewish economy, recalled the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit and all the Divine graces which had flowed from the open grave of Jesus as from a living spring.* Hence the Church did not separate Pentecost from Easter, but kept both in one and the same feast.† The time between Easter

* Origen thus enumerates the Christian festivals of his time. *Τὰ περὶ τῶν κυριακῶν, ἢ παρασκευῶν ἢ τοῦ πάσχα ἢ τῆς πεντηκοστῆς δ' ἡμερῶν γινόμενα.* "Contra Cels." viii. 22.

† "Pentecostem implere." Tertullian, "De idolat." 14. The Council of Elvira, in its canon 43, was the first to limit the celebration of Pentecost to the anniversary of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

and Pentecost was considered to be one long season of joy, during which the erect posture was continued in prayer, and fasting was suspended. On the other hand, the days immediately before Easter were devoted to the severest fast in remembrance of the agony and humiliation of the Lord. The fast was unbroken on the Sabbath, which was the anniversary of His lying in the tomb. This was called the great day of preparation. The night before Easter was passed in prayer, in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in worship. As soon as the dawn broke, the Christians saluted each other with the triumphant words, "The Lord is risen," and after the baptism of the neophytes the eucharistic feast was celebrated with great solemnity.

We have already described the sharp contentions which arose between the Christians of the East and West in reference to the date of Easter, and we have seen how Christian liberty triumphed over the false unity which the bishop of Rome had endeavoured prematurely to establish. The lofty spirituality which regulated the celebration of the Christian festivals comes out prominently in the recommendation of the "Coptic Constitution" on the subject of the fast before Easter. "If any voyager by sea," says this document, "finds that he cannot exactly recollect the date of Easter, let him postpone his fast to the week of Pentecost, for that which we celebrate is not properly the Passover, but the type of that which was promised."* Origen makes this excellent remark: "The perfect Christian, who lives in communion with the Word by

* Εἰ τις ἐν θαλάττῃ ὑπάρχων ἀγνοεῖ τὴν τοῦ πάσχα ἡμέραν γνοὺς νηστευέτω μετὰ τὴν πεντηκοστήν· οὐ γὰρ πάσχα φυλάττομεν ἀλλὰ τύπον τῶν ἐρχομένων. "Const. Egypt." ii. 55.

his words, his acts, and thoughts, makes his whole life one long Lord's Day. If he is always preparing for the true life by his renunciation of the life of sense, he is perpetually celebrating the preparation for the Passover. If it is always in his thoughts that Christ is our Passover, and that we are to feed upon His flesh, every day is with him a Passover feast. If he can say, 'We are risen with Christ, and are seated with Him in the heavenly places,' Pentecost for him knows no end; especially if, repairing to the upper chamber, he prepares himself by prayer to receive, in some measure like the apostles, the tongues of fire." *

Very early in the third century we find the introduction of another feast—that of Epiphany—in commemoration of the glorious consecration of Jesus to His ministry by baptism. According to the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, the disciples of Basilides introduced this into Egypt.† It is probable that they had met with the observance of this feast among the Judaising Churches of Palestine and Syria, who would attach peculiar importance to it from a theocratic point of view. The Church appropriated it in the course of the third century. We may conclude from the same passage of Clement, who mentions a minute calculation to determine the date of the birth of Christ, that this great fact began to be celebrated in the East in his day. At the commencement of the fourth century these feasts had passed into recognised institutions of the Church.

* Οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε οὐ ποιεῖ τὸ πάσχα. Origen, "Contra Cels." viii. 22.

† Εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ περιεργότερον τῇ γενέσει τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν οὐ μόνον τὸ ἔτος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἡμέραν προστιθέντες. Οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ Βασιλείδου καὶ τοῦ βαπτίσματος αὐτοῦ τὴν ημέραν ἑορτάζουσι. Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." i. 21, 145, 146.

To these great festivals we must add the anniversaries of the death of the martyrs. The Christians repaired in crowds to their tombs, there to read again the story of their sufferings, to revive their memory, and to partake of the Eucharist on those spots which seemed pre-eminently sacred to their brethren engaged in the same conflict. No superstition blended originally with this pious custom, as is evident from the manner in which the friends and disciples of Polycarp explain the funeral honours offered to him. "Can any suppose," they said, "that we are forsaking the Christ who suffered for the salvation of the whole world, or are transferring to others the honour which is due to Him alone? We worship Him as the Son of God; we do but love the martyrs, as they deserve, for their unconquerable love to their Lord and King, and desire to be their true brethren and followers. We have taken the bones of Polycarp, which are more precious than gold or gems, to put them in a fit place. May God permit us to gather again at this spot with joy and gladness, here to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, in remembrance of the conflicts he endured, and in order to brace to the same steadfast resistance his brethren in the faith."* It is unquestionable that this love for the martyrs assumed a fanatical character in the third century, and we have shown how it affected the question of ecclesiastical organisation. The grand and truly Christian idea of the solidarity of the Church triumphant and the Church militant, did not long confine itself to the true limits which it at first observed. We have cited passages from Origen and Cyprian which, beau-

* "Acta Polycrat." Eusebius, "H.E." iv. 15.

tiful as they are, are also perilous, because they associate the martyrs with the redeeming work of Christ by the supposed merit they had acquired. Between such commemoration and the invocation of saints there was but one step. This line was not crossed till the fourth century, but it is only just to admit, in spite of Tertullian's indignant protests, that the Church was already tending in the direction of saint-worship. The feeling which prompted the celebration of the anniversaries of the martyrs was, nevertheless, in its origin a feeling pure and high. The Church declared that she knew no barrier between earth and heaven, between the visible and the invisible, and that none were more living for her than her dead saints. She was not content with honouring only those who were illustrious. The Christian family loved to assemble in the catacombs around the cherished and revered remains of their beloved on the anniversary of their birthdays. There they found, as it were, a doubly sacred centre for their family affections. This explains the great importance attached to Christian burial-places. This family feast assumed a more general character when it was held in honour of a martyr. Very beautiful and touching in the early ages of the Church were these commemorative services, held in crypts covered with scriptural symbols, under dark arches dimly lighted by funeral lamps, along which reverberated the hymns of hope and love.

Such were the feasts celebrated before the Council of Nicæa. We find no trace of any but these,—the Easter feast, Pentecost, the Epiphany, which is as yet only partially observed, and the anniversaries of the

martyrs. There is no trace at this date of feasts in honour of Mary the mother of Christ: it is not till long after the time when the Epiphany was introduced that an obscure sect inaugurated this exaltation of the humblest and holiest of women, an exaltation which was not to stop short of apotheosis. The Christian feasts during the primitive age are all in remembrance of Christ. Christianity is not as yet victorious and powerful enough to inaugurate a new era in history, by making it recommence, as it were, in the cradle at Bethlehem, but it sets its seal on the life of its disciples, without suffering any idolatrous intermixture. It does not suppose it to be part of its mission to restore the worship of the creature, and thus to raise again, under a new form, the paganism it seeks to destroy. Thus it carefully avoids any imitation of the heathen mode of celebrating its mysteries.

The pagan festivals, especially under the Empire, were veritable saturnalia. Philo, accustomed to the solemn and sublime rites of Judaism, has described them with graphic power. He says it would not be possible to enumerate the gross and impure traditions associated with them. They were, in fact, days of idleness, of frivolity, of orgies of every description, distinguished from common days by the subversion of all that was natural, pure, and noble, and by the licence given to every base and sensual indulgence. Not content with encouraging the evil passions of individuals in their ordinary life, the priests of paganism seemed to seek in their feasts to unite all vile allurements in one stream, like the tributaries of a river, thus giving a mighty impetus to the corruption inherent

in their system. Oblations and expiatory rites were but a mockery in the midst of so much which was defiling.* The Church felt the necessity of distinguishing her festivals from these saturnalia of an impious worship, by giving to them a character of austere simplicity. The counsels of Gregory of Nazianzen on this subject faithfully represent the practice of the third century. He says: "Let us observe the feast, not with outward pomp, but in the spirit of God; not after an earthly, but a heavenly manner. How may we do this successfully? We will not crown our doors with flowers, we will not form processions of dancers, we will not decorate our streets. We will not gratify our senses or our tastes, lest we open the way to sin. We will not array ourselves in sumptuous and effeminate attire, nor with gold and diamonds and gay colours, which only disguise natural beauty. We will not indulge in luxurious feasts; we will reject all superfluity, which is so much taken from the necessities of those who are fashioned of the same clay with ourselves. These pomps and feastings may befit those Greeks who offer to their gods the incense of their savoury viands, and who worship those evil beings in a manner worthy of them. But we, who are worshippers of the Word, shall find our highest joy in His teaching, in the study of His holy law, and in dwelling on the facts which in our feasts we celebrate." †

The only outward specialities of the Christian festivals were the white garments, which it seems to have been the practice of the Christians to wear on these

* Philo, "Opera," edit. Pfeiffer, vol. ii. p. 48.
† Gregor. Nazianz. "Oratio 38 in Theoph."

occasions from very early times,* and the sacred torches, designed also to represent the joy of the children of the light.† While these feasts retained their simplicity, they derived their value from the liberty and spontaneity of those who took part in them. It was only at the commencement of the fourth century that the Council of Elvira passed a rigorous rule for the observance of the Lord's day and the attendance of all the faithful at the public services, a rule which the Christian emperors subsequently made a law of the state.‡

§ 2.—*Buildings Dedicated to Christian Worship.*

If we distinguish between the idea of a temple in the Jewish sense and that of a house of prayer, designed simply to answer the purposes of public worship, we shall find that the Fathers of this age do not contradict themselves when they assert that the Christians have no sanctuary, and yet speak of buildings where they gather together, and which they regard with very natural feelings of veneration. Christian antiquity absolutely rejected the notion of a sanctuary, that is, of a sacred place where the presence of God should be felt in a special and peculiar manner. The Christians did not believe simply, like the ancient Persians, that the Divinity which fills the universe cannot be confined within walls, a grand idea which Solomon had magnificently expressed when, in his dedication of the temple, he declared that the heaven of heavens could not con-

* "Candidus egreditur nitidis exercitus undis." Fragment of a poem concerning the Passover, attributed to Lactantius. Augustine, "Archæol." i. 496, 497.

† We find an allusion to the use of sacred torches in the 34th canon of the Council of Elvira, A.D. 305.

‡ "Council of Elvira," canon 21; "Cod. Theodos." lib. xv. tit. 5, 2.

tain Him. They also believed that the first result of redemption had been to restore man and his dwelling-place to God, and that temples, properly so called, were, like expiatory sacrifices, now no longer needed. Thus Minutius Felix was the true exponent of the Church of the second century, when he declared that Christians had no altars: "Aras non habemus." *

The idea of an altar is in its exact meaning inseparable from that of an atoning sacrifice to be laid on it by the worshipper. Such an idea has no place in the Christian system. It is a direct attack on the fundamental principle of the gospel, and the word itself should be carefully avoided in its material acceptation. Minutius Felix rejects the idea of a temple no less than of an altar. "Why," he says, "should I rear a temple to God, when the world of His creation cannot contain Him?" † Origen speaks no less decisively in the third century. He makes no concession to Celsus, who urges it as a reproach against the new religion that it has no sanctuary.

"We desire," says the great Christian spiritualist, "neither temples nor statues for our God: we leave such things to the demons, who choose one place in preference to another, without knowing why. Let us follow Christ, who would turn away our eyes from things that are seen, not because they are corruptible only, but corrupting. He teaches us to offer to God the true service of holiness and prayer, through Him

* Minut. Felix, "Octavius," c. 32; Arnobius, "Disputat." vi. 1.

† Minut. Felix. "Octavius," c. 22. The word temple was reserved for pagan sanctuaries, and was never applied to Christian churches till after the time of Constantine. Ambrose, "Ep. ad Marc." 33; Bingham, "Orig." iii. p. 9.

whom we recognise as the Mediator between the created and the uncreated, who imparts to us the gifts of the Father, and at the same time presents our petitions to Him, as our Priest." * "The true temple of God," says Origen elsewhere, "is the man who bears His image; primarily, therefore, the Man Christ Jesus, and then the believing soul animated by His Spirit. This is the living statue of the Deity, such as no Jupiter sculptured by Phidias can equal." † It follows that the worship of God cannot be confined exclusively to any building. "We may pray," says Tertullian, "wherever we feel constrained to prayer, for the apostles did not sin when they sang the praises of God before their jailer any more than St. Paul when he broke bread upon the ship." ‡ "Every place into which we were driven by persecution proved to us a true place of prayer," says Dionysius of Alexandria, "were it a field, a desert, or a prison." § Justin Martyr spoke in the same tone when he replied to the question of the judge on his trial. "Where do you assemble?" asked the proconsul. "Each one where he will and where he is able. You suppose that we all meet in the same place. It is no such thing; for the God of the Christians is confined to no place; He fills with His invisible presence earth and heaven, and He is worshipped everywhere by those who believe in Him." ‖

* Τεθήπαμεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν νοῦν ἡμῶν μεταθέντα ἀπὸ παντὸς αἰσθητοῦ. Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 34.

† Ibid. viii. 17, 18.

‡ "Omni loco, quem opportunitas aut etiam necessitas importaret." Tertullian, "De orat." 19.

§ Πᾶς ὁ τῆς καθ' ἕκαστον θλίψεως τόπος πανηγυρικὸν ἡμῖν γέγονε χωρίον. Dionysius of Alexandria, "Apud Eusebius, H. E." vii. 22.

‖ "Acta Justini."

This truly spiritual conception of worship is corroborated by the fact that during the first three centuries we find no trace of any special consecration of buildings for worship; no necessity was felt for such a ceremonial for such a building, any more than for the dwelling of a Christian family, which was no less a sanctuary, as was every place where God dwelt." * Originally, the word Church was not applied to the house of prayer, but simply to the Christian assembly. Clement of Alexandria says: "I do not call the place where the elect gather together a Church, but apply that name to the assembled believers themselves." † Nothing could show more clearly that it was the Christian community itself which was regarded as the temple of God, than the constant use of the word edification, in reference to the confirmation and development of faith. It is the living stones of the spiritual temple which are thus to be cemented together. "It is not the place which sanctifies the man, but the man who sanctifies the place," is the admirable comment of the "Apostolical Constitutions." ‡

The opposition to the idea of a sanctuary, in the strict sense of the term, did not prevent the early Christians from building houses of prayer to serve the purpose of worship, for it was not possible that they should be able to meet in private houses, except in rare instances, where the house had the proportions of a spacious building,

* Bingham, "Orig." iv. p. 71.

† Οὐ γὰρ νῦν τὸν τόπον, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄθροισμα τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν ἐκκλησίαν καλῶ. Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." vii. 5, 29.

‡ Οὐχ ὁ τόπος γὰρ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἁγιάζει ἀλλ' ὁ ἄνθρωπὸς τὸν τόπον. "Const. Apost." viii. 34.

as in the case of the Roman senator, Pudens.* From the time of St. Paul we find the Christians of Ephesus assembling in the hall used for public instruction by Tyrannus the orator. Justin Martyr found a similar place in Rome, where he might give instruction in Christianity.† Clement of Alexandria, in his touching story of the young brigand restored to the Church by St. John, supposes the existence of a public place of worship.‡ The Chronicle of Edessa relates the destruction of a Christian temple in the great inundation of 203.§ Subsequently, under Alexander Severus, the Christians held at Rome buildings specially set apart for their worship, which the emperor allowed them to retain, in spite of the clamour of the publicans, who would have dispossessed them.‖ These buildings had greatly multiplied by the time of Diocletian. "Who could count," says Eusebius, "these assemblies of thousands of believers in each town, these numerous gatherings in the houses of prayer in every city? They have become so large that the old buildings would no longer suffice, and these have been replaced by great churches."¶ These churches appeared so important to the emperor, that he thought it necessary to decree their destruction at the same time with that of the Holy Scriptures.** According to Optatus of Miletus, there existed at Rome, at the beginning of the fourth century,

* "Acta Pudentis." An apocryphal writing, the "Recognitiones," which belongs to the second century, shows that a rich citizen of Antioch turned his house into a basilica. "Ita ut domus suæ ingentem basilicam ecclesiæ homine consecraret." "Recognit." x. 71.

† "Acta Justini." See Bingham, "Orig." iii. 28, 29.

‡ Clement of Alexandria. Τίς σωζ. . . πλοῦς. . . . 37. Eusebius, "H.E." iii. 23.

§ Asseman, "Bibliotheca Orientalis," i. 387.

‖ Lamprid. "Vita Alex. Sever." c. 49.

¶ Eusebius, "H.E." viii. 2.

** Ibid. v. 1.

more than forty edifices devoted to Christian worship.* It is then beyond question that such buildings had greatly multiplied. The passages we have quoted give equal evidence that they began from the third century to be called churches. This expression is commonly used by Tertullian and Origen, without any idea of derogating from Christian spirituality.† The term house of prayer was also in frequent use.‡ It is far more exact than the word church, for there was always great objection to applying to a building of stone, the designation which belongs really to the spiritual temple. Towards the close of the third century the word *kuriakon* or *Dominicum* §—the place of the Lord—came into use. Thus a beautiful analogy was suggested between the Sunday and the Christian temple.

It was, however, in the natural course of things that this elevated spirituality should gradually lose its original character. Origen was not unfaithful to it when he acknowledged that the place where the Christians assemble has about it something helpful and beneficial,‖ and that he regarded it as the meeting-place between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven, between the Christians who pray and the Saviour who

* Optat. Milet, "De schismat. Donat." ii. 4.

† "In ecclesiam venire." Tertullian, "De idolatria," 7. "Tales sunt in nobis quorum fides hoc tantummodo habet ut ad ecclesiam veniant." Origen, "In Josuah Homil." x. 3.

‡ Eusebius, "H.E." x. 3. Comp. Matt. xxi. 13; Mark xi. 17.

§ "In dominicum sine sacrificio venis." Cyprian, "De opera et eleem." 15; Eusebius, "H.E." ix. 10; "De laude Constant." 17. M. de Rossi quotes an elegant inscription describing the basilica of St. Clement, under the name of "Dominicum." This designation, according to him, belongs to the early years of the fourth century, since, after that, the churches are described as "basilicas" or "tituli." Rossi, "Bulletino archæol." vol. i. i. p. 25. The word "titulus" was taken from the designation of the priest to whom the parish church was appropriated.

‖ Origen, "De oratione," c. 31.

answers their prayer, and comes with the angelic choir to meet them. Origen attached no sacredness to the building apart from the spiritual service there offered: it was the prayers of saints which filled the house with a holy fragrance, without which the stones themselves were but common things. How difficult it was, however, to maintain this lofty spirituality, we gather from the reproaches addressed by Clement of Alexandria to the Egyptian Christians. He accuses them of belying in their daily life the gentleness and piety which their faces exhibited in the hour of worship, as if, like those polypi which reflect the colour of the rocks to which they adhere, they might change their aspect and practice as they changed their place. "Are we not," he says, "sacrificing reality to a mere semblance, if we cast aside on leaving the church the gravity and sweetness of deportment which we had assumed on entering it, and become again like the worldly multitude around us? Those who so act convict themselves of a lie, and show what their real character is, when they thus throw aside the mask of sanctity. Surely we show but little respect for the Word of God when we hasten to put it away from us so soon as heard."*

This tendency to walk after the flesh rather than after the Spirit, as St. Paul expresses it, developed itself with terrible rapidity when persecution was relaxed, and the Church found itself in a position to rear splendid temples under the sanction and with the resources of the empire. Sanctuaries, or temples in the

* Τοιούτους δὲ ἐχρῆν παρ' ὅλον τὸν βίον φαίνεσθαι τοὺς Χριστῷ τελουμένους οἵους σφᾶς ἐν ἐκκλησίαις ἐπὶ τὸ σεμνότερον σχηματίζουσιν. Clement of Alexandria, "Pædag." iii. 11, 80.

Jewish sense, reappeared with the restoration of holy days, ceremonial piety, and the hierarchy. The movement of opinion which, in the course of the third century, gradually transformed the primitive institutions of the Church, such as the episcopate, discipline, and the sacrament, operated in the same direction with regard to the buildings dedicated to worship. Everything was ready on the eve of the Council of Nicæa for the complete realisation, in externals, of the great revolution already accomplished in the spirit of worship; for we must never forget that outward transformations are always preceded by inward changes, and that this holds good even in relation to the triumph of religious materialism over true spirituality. For the honour of mankind be it remembered, that the soul is never irresistibly dragged along by anything external; it falls a victim only to its own unfaithfulness to the principles that would have secured its triumph.

We have no exact information as to the plan of the houses of prayer before the time of Constantine: but the fragment of the "Apostolical Constitutions" which contains details on this subject,* although much interpolated, still gives us some idea of the principal features of the primitive architecture of the Church, in which art was entirely subordinated to the religious idea.

It appears probable that the first basilicas erected under Constantine, and of which several, although they have been repeatedly rebuilt, have preserved the original plan, were erected upon the model of the houses of prayer in the previous century, with such adornments superadded as the prosperity of the Church

* "Const. Apost." ii. 57.

aided by imperial gold rendered possible. Various hypotheses have been founded upon the correlation always existing between two successive periods, of which the second is, in a measure, a continuation of the first. It is certain that the plan of construction of the churches of the fourth century rests entirely upon the ecclesiastical theory of the previous age, though that theory had lost all real vitality after Christianity had become the religion of the state. The stones retained, longer than the Church itself, the memory of the time when a high barrier was interposed between the mixed multitude and the Christian converts who had all avouched a personal faith purified and strengthened by discipline. The architecture of the basilicas of the fourth century bears the impress of this grand idea, which was actually realised in the preceding period. To this it owes the peculiar character, recognisable in the buildings which belong, at least in their general outline, to this era. It follows that if we confine our attention to the plan of these edifices, passing by the abundant ornamentation and embellishment added in the days of imperial favour, we shall find, in the few churches which have preserved the Christian architecture of the fourth century, the principal features of the earlier buildings. In the East, three basilicas of the time of Constantine are described by Eusebius in an inflated tone of panegyric. These are, first, the Church built at Tyre, then the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and, lastly, that of the Nativity at Bethlehem—all of which retain their original plan.* In

* Eusebius, "H.E." x. 4; "Vita Constantini," iii. 25, 41, 42. See the work of M. Melchior de Vogué, "Les Eglises de la Terre Sainte," Didron,

the West we have, in the Church of St. Clement at Rome, the true type of the basilica of the fourth century, which has been preserved through successive reconstructions, especially in the crypt, which is far the oldest part. The little basilica of St. Generosa, the remains of which have been lately discovered underneath the catacomb of the same name, in the site occupied by the temple of the Brothers Arvales, is certainly the oldest Christian monument that we possess, but it is too dilapidated and incomplete to supply any information as reliable as that furnished by the Church of St. Clement.*

The fundamental idea in these buildings was unquestionably that which forms the basis of all the ecclesiastical constitutions of the first three centuries, namely, the entire separation of the baptised from the unbaptised, of those who have the right to partake of the sacrament and those who are excluded, whether as not yet admitted or as excommunicate. The basilica proper is approached by a vestibule, which is the place assigned to the mere hearers and to the penitents, who are kept on the threshold of the church till its doors are thrown open to them after searching examination. We find the existence of this separation distinctly mentioned in several places: all the documents on the subject of ecclesiastical organisation from the commencement of the second century proceed on this implied principle.

1871, especially the remarks on the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. The Christian churches of Syria, described by Mr. Waddington, are of later date. "Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie expliquées et recueillies," by M. W. H. Waddington, Member of the Institute. Paris, Didot, 1870.

* Rossi, "Bulletino archæol." 1st year, p. 25. See Bunsen's important work on all the ancient basilicas. "Basilik des Christlich. Roms." Munich, 1842; and Dr. Hubsch's work, "Die altchristlichen Kirchen." Carlsruhe, 1859.

They are confirmed by the statement of Gregory Thaumaturgus, the disciple of Origen, who says distinctly that a place was reserved for the catechumens and penitents on the threshold of the church. "The place of supplication is outside the house of prayer. There the penitent sinner, waiting without, is to ask the prayers of the faithful who enter the church."* Gregory Thaumaturgus places the hearers and the catechumens at the very door of the house of prayer, and calls the place thus allotted to them the *narthex*.† Tertullian assigns to them the same position, and the distinction which he marked between those who occupied the court and those who were permitted to stand on the threshold, shows that as early as his day a portico was erected to shelter the latter class.‡

If we pass on to the basilica itself, we shall find that its arrangement is in harmony with the principles of the preceding period in all which distinguishes it from a pagan temple. Those temples were designed to be the shrine of the god or idol; they were complete when they had provided a pedestal for the statue and an altar for sacrifice. The Christian Church, on the contrary, was dedicated to the worship of a God who is Spirit, and whom it cannot contain; it is to be open to all the faithful, that together they may worship, listen to the reading and exposition of the Scriptures,§ and partake of

* Ἡ *πρόσκλαυσις ἔξω τῆς πύλης τοῦ εὐκτήριου· ἡ ἀκρόασις ἐνδόθι τῆς πύλης ἐν τῷ νάρθηκι.* Greg. Thaumat. "Ep. canon." c. 11; Eusebius, "H. E." x. 4.

† The word *narthex* signifies a ferule, and represents an enclosure much longer than it is wide.

‡ "Reliquas autem libidinum furias non *modo limine* verum omni ecclesiæ tecto submovemus." Tertullian, "De pudicit." 4.

§ By these various uses, the house of prayer, in primitive times, in many ways recalled the synagogue, though it differed from it in other re-

the eucharistic feast. It must therefore enclose a large area, which, even before the addition of naves, was so divided, that the men should be separated from the women.*

The worship, if we omit the singing of hymns, for which no special arrangement was required, consisted of two distinct parts; first, the reading of the Word of God, followed by the teaching or preaching, which was entrusted mainly to the bishop, and then the celebration of the Lord's Supper. A high desk was placed for the reader;† the bishop had his pulpit,‡ and as the elders or priests were his coadjutors in all things, it was convenient that they should be grouped around him.§ We thus get the first nucleus of a choir, with its desks or *ambones*,‖ and its *cathedra* or episcopal seat. The altar, properly so-called, of later ages, has as yet no existence; in its place the eucharistic table occupies the centre of this elementary choir, which has not received as yet any particular name.¶ The table is of wood and without ornamentation.** It is, in fact, simply the table for the Lord's Supper, and presents no analogy to the altar of sacrifice in the Jewish sanctuary. This is made

spects. Hence it may have been designated by this name, to which the dispersion of the Jews would give so wide a familiarity. This may be inferred from the curious inscription discovered by Mr. Waddington, not far from Damascus, on a religious building dating from the year 318. It runs thus: "Synagogue of the Marcionites." Such a name would hardly have been given to its place of worship by a sect which held Judaism in such abhorrence, if it had not come into common use among Christians.

* Αἱ γυναῖκες κεχωρισμένως. "Const. Apost." ii. 57.

† *Pulpitum.* Cyprian, "Ep." 38, 2.

‡ Ὁ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου θρόνος. "Const. Apost." ii. 57. Pastor Hermas speaks of the *cathedra*, lib. i. visio iii. 11.

§ Eusebius, "H.E." vii. 30; Παρ' ἑκάτερα (θρόνου) καθεζέσθω τὸ πρεσβυτέριον. "Const. apost." ii. 57.

‖ *Ambon* comes from ἀναβαίνω, to mount.

¶ Eusebius, "H.E." 10, 4. ** Augustine, "Ep. 50 ad Bonifat."

perfectly plain by the fact that the communicants, men and women, gathered around it for the Lord's Supper, and took the bread and the cup into their own hands.* Subsequently the house of prayer, while reproducing the same type on a larger scale, approaches more nearly to the great pagan basilicas; columns and naves are multiplied; in the elevation of the choir we trace the progress of the sacerdotal theory, and the eucharistic table is gradually transformed into an altar of sacrifice, under the influence of the sacramentarian ideas fostered by Cyprian.†

We are still able, however, by the aid of the basilicas of the fourth century, which are a sort of commentary on an obscure text, to represent to ourselves in some measure what were the edifices used for Christian worship in the middle of the third century. The circular form, so well adapted to the pagan temple, which had no other purpose than to be the shrine of the god, was abandoned for the oblong. Until the reign of Constantine, when the cruciform structure was adopted, the churches were built in the form of a vessel, directed generally towards the east, as the quarter where the new light had arisen.‡ The building was divided into three parts: 1st. The portico, where stood the penitents and those who were hearers only; 2nd. The nave, divided into two sections, to be occupied by the believers, male and female separately; 3rd. The rudiment of the

* *Τραπέζῃ παραστάντα καὶ χεῖρας εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τῆς ἁγίας τροφῆς προτείναντα.* Dionysius of Alexandria *apud* Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 9.

† *Τράπεζα κυρίου.* 1 Cor. x. 21; Augustine, "Archæol." i. p. 413; ii. 611. The altars were still of wood in the time of Constantine. Cyprian already gives the name altar to the eucharistic table. "Quasi post aras diaboli accedere ad altare Dei fas sit." "Ep." 65. 1.

‡ *Εοικε νηί. . . κατ' ἀνατολάς.* "Const. Apost." ii. 57.

present choir, with the pulpit for the bishop, and the seats for the elders placed in a semicircle. The table for the Eucharist and the reader's desk stood between the choir and the space occupied by the faithful. The offerings of the latter were laid upon a second table placed on the right of the table of the Eucharist.* A cistern was often made in the portico for the convenience of ablutions, which were however not compulsory; † for a long time a place was reserved within the church itself for the baptismal font. No images were allowed in the place devoted to worship. When the attempt was made to introduce into the house of prayer the symbolical representations used in the catacombs, it was severely condemned by a decree of the Council of Elvira.‡ The Church would sanction nothing which might distract the eyes of the worshipper. She loved to liken the house of prayer to Noah's ark. Its purpose was not to serve as a sumptuous abode, but to bear the Christians safely above the surging floods of persecution and temptation. It was to be a lifeboat, not a pleasure boat. Christian art, as we shall see, sought freer expression for itself in the catacombs, to counteract the gloomy appearance of death.

It did not fear to arch the sepulchral vault and cover it with frescoes. We shall find the same methods transferred to the temples, and used under the full light of the sun, when the faith of Christ has ceased to be

* This table to receive the gifts was called *παστοφόριον*, or table of offerings. "Const. Apost." viii. 15.

† Eusebius, "H. E." x. 4; Tertullian. "De orat." 11. He blames the use of ablutions, as a custom borrowed from Mosaism.

‡ "Ne quod colitur et adoratur in parietibus depingatur." "Concil. Illibert." c. 33.

a proscribed thing. Thus, with some modifications, due chiefly to change of circumstances, Christian art may still be true to its early traditions while constructing those noble basilicas of the fourth century, which still claim our admiration even after the marvels of mediæval art.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES—ITS TRANSFORMATION DURING THIS PERIOD.

§ 1.—*Public Worship in the Time of Justin Martyr and of Irenæus.*

PUBLIC worship in the second century is simply the amplification of private worship, and contains no other elements. In the time of Justin Martyr and of Irenæus it has all the moral beauty and spirituality which characterised it in the upper chambers of the apostolic age. It is at once a spiritual sacrifice and a Eucharist —the thankoffering of the Christian heart to God for that full salvation which leaves nothing to be supplemented. The Lord's Supper is the centre and crown of the whole worship; all the earlier part of the service is but a preparation for its celebration at the close. While this remains the symbolical expression of the spiritual sacrifice, worship retains its primitive purity. The sacrifice is real, precisely in proportion to its spirituality; the true offering is always that of the heart, of the will, of the whole being. When the Lord's Supper is regarded as a purely external act, in which the bread and wine are offered to God instead of the

living sacrifice of the Christian himself, we are carried at once into the region of fiction. The sacrifice, ceasing to be real, has no longer any meaning; the Lord's Supper is only truly a spiritual sacrifice, so long as it retains its eucharistic character as a thanksgiving for the salvation already finished.* In truth, when the Christian begins to doubt the Divine forgiveness, and seeks to appease God by ritual observances, he falls back from the covenant of the gospel into the old covenant with its expiatory sacrifices; and as he dare no longer offer the blood of bulls and of goats, he comes to believe that the sacrifice of Calvary needs to be constantly repeated, like the Mosaic sacrifices, in order to answer the demands of God's justice, which was not once and for ever satisfied on the cross. The Christian, under this view, learns to think far less of the sacrifice of himself which he should present, than of this ever renewed offering of the body of Christ. The Lord's Supper ceases to be the great thankoffering of the Church, yielding herself to Him who has wrought out for her a full redemption: it becomes the partial expiation of sin, needing to be repeated again and again. In ceasing to be a Eucharist it ceases to be a spiritual sacrifice at all, and the entire service changes its character; it becomes what is called the mystery of the altar, instead of being the sublime interchange of love between the redeemed and pardoned Church and the heavenly Bridegroom.

The second century knows nothing of this transformation of Christianity, which begins to become apparent

* We do not touch here on the question of transubstantiation or consubstantiation. We are not treating of the elements of the Lord's Supper, but only of the nature of the sacrifice itself therein presented to God.

towards the close of the third. This is evident from that declaration of Justin Martyr which might serve as the epigraph of the faithful picture drawn by him of public worship in his day. He says of the Christians: "We are the true sacerdotal race, and God receives no sacrifices but from His priests. God owns as acceptable sacrifices to Him those offerings which are presented by Christians throughout the world in the name of His Son, and according to His appointment in the eucharistic feast of bread and wine. I declare that the prayers and thanksgivings presented by those who have the right to offer them are the sole sacrifices which God owns and accepts."* In order clearly to mark the eucharistic character of these offerings, Justin Martyr adds that they are presented in recognition of the goodness of God, both in the kingdom of nature, in which His liberal hand has prepared all that is necessary for our sustenance, and in the kingdom of grace, in which He has wrought out our full redemption by the sufferings of His Son.† It is evident that Justin Martyr considers the one essential sacrifice to be that of prayer, which ascends to God in acknowledgment of His benefits, spiritual and temporal. The Lord's Supper is the highest symbolic expression of this adoration of the heart. Now, what is the sacrifice of prayer if it be not the sacrifice of the heart, the voluntary surrender to God of the soul that prays? and in the same way united prayer is the unreserved consecration to God of the whole Christian people. This is the grand idea

* "Οτι μὲν οὖν καὶ εὐχαὶ καὶ εὐχαριστίαι, ὑπὸ τῶν ἀξίων γινόμεναι, τέλειαι μόναι καὶ εὐάρεστοι εἰσι τῷ θεῷ θυσίαι, καὶ αὐτός φημί. Justin, "Dial. c. Tryph." c. 116.

† Justin, "Apol." i. 67.

which pervades and penetrates all the worship of this period, and which loses nothing of its purity as it unfolds itself in successive acts of devotion.

In chapters lxv. to lxvii. of his "Apology," Justin has drawn a very complete picture of Christian worship as it was celebrated in his day. It will be well to quote this important passage, which is our chief authority on the subject. It runs thus: "On the day which is called Sunday all the Christians inhabiting the town or the country assemble in the same place. The Acts of the Apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as time permits. Then, when the reader has finished, the president of the assembly delivers an exhortation, charging his hearers to imitate the holy examples set before them. Then the whole assembly rises at once, and united prayer ascends to God. After the prayer, bread is brought and wine mixed with water. The president then in his turn presents prayers and praises to God, as he is able, and all the people say Amen. When the Eucharist has been distributed every believer partakes of it, and the deacons carry it to those who are absent. The Christians who possess worldly goods bring a free-will offering in proportion to their means. All these gifts are collected and placed in the hands of the president, who, by this means, supplies the needs of the widows and orphans, of the sick, of prisoners and strangers, and all those who, from any other cause, are in want. He is thus the helper of all the needy."*

If, without pressing the details, we try to realise from this passage what was the worship of the second century, we shall observe first of all that it is divided

* Justin, "Apol." i. 67.

into distinct parts, the religious service preceding the communion and the eucharistic meal. It is important, however, to note that this division of worship into two parts is not yet as strongly marked as it afterwards becomes, when the Eucharist is celebrated as a mystery, to be hidden from eyes profane, when the hearers and catechumens are dismissed before the feast begins, and when the severest discipline is exercised to prevent the intrusion of any but those who have passed through their three years' probation. There is nothing in the account given by Justin Martyr which could suggest any such separation in his day. It would rather appear as if, at that time, all who took part in the first service had a right to remain as spectators of the second, though it is well ascertained that none but the baptised partook of the eucharistic meal. God recognises no priests but Christians.* It follows that the celebration of public worship in the second century was evidently of a less solemn character than in the following period; it was less removed from the common life and private devotion of the Christians. We shall see what serious consequences followed on the absolute separation, which was made half a century later, between the two parts of the service, and hence between the baptised and those who were hearers only.

According to Justin, worship commenced with the reading of the sacred books. It is probable that in harmony with the constant practice of the Church, as it appears in its oldest liturgical documents, this reading was preceded by an invocation or the singing of a psalm. We can hardly suppose, while no meal was taken

* "Dial. c. Tryph." c. 116.

in the family until the father had given thanks, that the Christians would gather around the table of the Lord, laden with His most precious gifts, without thanksgiving and prayer. The assembly met under the presidency of a bishop or elder, who undertook the general supervision and direction. The simple designation, president, which suggests nothing clerical, shows that as yet sacerdotalism was unknown in the Church. After the first hymn, the reader rose and opened the Scriptures, as was done every Sabbath day in the synagogues of the dispersed Jews. The Old Testament was not considered enough, the apostolic writings had also their place in the service, especially the Gospels and the Acts. The passages to be read are not as yet appointed beforehand by a fixed plan, for the length of the reading depends on the length of time which may be available.*

After the reading comes the preaching, which is undertaken by the president of the assembly, laymen not being excluded, as is shown very distinctly by passages already quoted. The preaching is evidently based upon the portion of Scripture which has been read; it is not an oratorical or philosophic harangue; it is strictly a part of worship, and has a directly practical aim, urging upon the hearers to follow in the footsteps of the apostles and prophets. †

The first part of the service, which is in reality only introductory, concludes with prayer. The assembly rises in a body, to show that the prayer is a collective

* Τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων ἢ τὰ συγγράμματα τῶν προφητῶν ἀναγινώσκεται μέχρις ἐγχωρεῖ. Justin, "Apol." i. 67.

† Ὁ προεστὼς διὰ λόγου τὴν νουθεσίαν καὶ πρόκλησιν τῆς τῶν καλῶν τούτων μιμήσεως ποιεῖται. Ibid.

act.* It is commenced in solemn silence; the Church holds itself still before God, but this silence has a voice; it goes up to heaven in groanings which cannot be uttered, in supplications not the less ardent because they are unexpressed.† Yet silence alone would be inadequate, for as Justin himself says, the Church has requests which it is bound to present to God, and which are most fitly uttered in the first part of the service, since they have no direct connection with the Eucharist. Such are the prayers for kings, for enemies and persecutors, and those also for the consolation and sanctification of believers. This intercessory prayer is distinct from the thanksgiving, which is properly eucharistic. ‡ To this stage in the service is assigned the prayer by acclamation, mentioned in the same canon of the Council of Laodicea.§ But as an acclamation can be only a refrain, it is probable that the president or a deacon briefly enumerated the subjects of prayer, and the assembly responded by acclamation, as by the Amen to the closing prayers.

This first part of the worship is not yet as fully developed as it is subsequently, when the unbaptised are required to leave before the celebration of the Lord's Supper. At the conclusion of the first service, the Eucharist, properly so called, begins. As this is to be at once the feast of brotherly charity and of Divine love, it is opened by the kiss of peace, which

* Ἔπειτα ἀνιστάμεθα κοινῇ πάντες καὶ εὐχὰς πέμπομεν. Justin, "Apol." i. 67.

† The custom of silent prayer is confirmed by Decree 19 of the Council of Laodicea. Τῶν πιστῶν τρεῖς εὐχαὶ, πρώτην διὰ σιωπῆς, See Augustine, "Archæol," ii. 57. ‡ Harnack, pp. 248, 249.

§ Τὴν δὲ δευτέραν καὶ τρίτην διὰ προσφωνησέως. Augustine, "Archæol." ii. 57.

seals the sacred and tender union of the proscribed Christians, who find themselves the objects of so much hatred as soon as they cross the threshold of the house of prayer.* Love which does not act is not sincere. The kiss of peace would be hypocrisy or a vain form if it were not accompanied by a substantial token of love. It is at this moment, therefore, that the communicants bring their offerings, and lay them at the feet of the president of the assembly.† How could they sit down at the table of their common Father, where the boundlessness of His benefits is so plainly set forth, if they forgot their brethren in distress? The bread and wine of the Lord's Supper recal the body and blood of the Lord: is not that sacred body still present with the Church, as He Himself says, in the persons of the poor? Has He not said that whatsoever is done to the poor, the hungry, the naked, is done unto Himself? This real presence of the body of Christ in the poor has always been especially felt by the Church at the Lord's Supper; hence this has been made the occasion of her most generous offerings.

The first and chief of these offerings was the bread and wine of the mystical feast which were brought by the Christians.‡ Especially worthy of notice here is the close union so admirably maintained in primitive Christianity between nature and grace, between the God of creation and the God of redemption, whom Gnostic dualism opposed to one another.

The bread and the wine of the Holy Communion are

* Ἀλλήλους φιλήματι ἀσπαζόμεθα παυσάμενοι τῶν εὐχῶν. Justin, "Apol." 65.

† Ibid. i. 67.

‡ Προσφέρεται καὶ οἶνος καὶ ὕδωρ. Ibid.

regarded as the first-fruits of creation; they are presented to God in acknowledgment of His fatherly providence, which, in ripening the corn and the fruitful vine, provides for man his daily sustenance. We have thus, as it were, the Eucharist of nature, which is to become further the Eucharist of grace, for this subordinate use of the symbolism detracts nothing from its higher significance as setting forth the crucified body of the Redeemer. Justin unites the two in the following manner. "The Christians," he says, "offer no other sacrifice than that of the Lord's Supper, in recognition that they receive their daily food and drink from God, and in the remembrance of the suffering of the Son of God endured for them."* Therefore the bread of the Lord's Supper is an ordinary loaf before its consecration, for it is to representthe daily bread which is the basis of our bodily strength, as the broken body of Christ is the basis of our higher life.

Irenæus has followed out the same train of thought with singular boldness. The faithful, when they bring the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, offer first to God the first-fruits of creation: not that He needs a gift, but simply to mark their gratitude to Him who has ordained that the earth shall bring forth these fruits for our sustenance.† "We are bound," he says, "to bring an oblation to God, and to show ourselves in all things grateful to the Creator, offering Him in purity and sincerity of faith, in firmness of hope, in

* Ταῦτα γὰρ μόνα καὶ Χριστιανοὶ παρέλαβον ποιεῖν, καὶ ἐπ' ἀναμνήσει δὲ τῆς τροφῆς αὐτῶν ξηρᾶς τε καὶ ὑγρᾶς ἐν ᾗ καὶ τοῦ πάθους, ὃ πέπονθε δι' αὐτοὺς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, μέμνηται. Justin, "Dial. c. Tryph." c. 117.

† "Offerre primitias Deo ex suis creaturis." Irenæus, "Adv. hæres." iv. 17, 18.

warmth of love, the first-fruits of the gifts which we receive through His bounty in creation." Irenæus goes even further, for he sees in creation, especially in the corn and the vine, the first incarnation, as it were, of the creative Word. He does not place this first incarnation on the same level with the second, but he does attach great importance to it, in order to show that the heretics who see in the work of the six days only the accursed production of an evil power, fall into blasphemous error.* Thus the present is linked on to the past, and the Christians perpetuate one of the most beautiful practices of the ancient Jewish worship, as they thus offer to God the first-fruits of the earth on which He has made His sun to shine and His fertilising dew to fall. Such was the offertory of the Church in the second century.

When the bread and wine had been placed on the table, the bishop, as president and representative of the assembly, pronounced two prayers. † Those present signified their assent to his words by the Amen, in which all voices united. ‡ As themselves priests and sons of God, they knew no high priest but Jesus Christ. Hence they used their right to take part directly in this prayer, which is, as Justin strongly expresses it, § pre-eminently the sacerdotal act. Irenæus is equally explicit on this point. According to him, God has appointed in the gospel days a new sacrifice, of which Christians are the spiritual priests. Their offerings

* See these passages from Irenæus, and the remarks on them, in "Early Years of Christianity," vol. iii. "Heresy and Christian Doctrine," pp. 395–399.

† Ὁ προεστὼς εὐχὰς ὁμοίως καὶ εὐχαριστίας ἀναπέμπει. Justin, "Apol." i. 67.

‡ Καὶ ὁ λαὸς ἐπευφημεῖ λέγων τὸ ἀμήν. Ibid.

§ Justin, "Dial. c. Tryph." 116, 117.

are prayer and praise, the fruit of the lips, their body—in a word, their whole being. Thus the sacrifice of the Eucharist is not carnal, but spiritual, and it is by this grand characteristic that its purity is maintained.*

In the second century the eucharistic prayer became greatly amplified, though it had not yet assumed a liturgical character. It was entirely free, and was left, as Justin expressly tells us, to the discretion or capacity of the officiator.† Addressing God first of all as the Father of all creatures, it blessed Him for the fulness of His gifts, enumerating first the gifts of nature. Justin reverts more than once in his writings to this idea. He says explicitly that the Christians delight to praise the Creator, as far as they are able, in their eucharistic prayers, for all the benefits bestowed upon them, not casting to the flames, as the pagans do in their sacrifices, that which was intended by God to sustain the life of His creatures.‡ This first prayer concludes with a doxology. "The president presents praise and thanksgiving to God, the Father of all, in the name of the Son and the Holy Ghost." When this prayer has been closed by the Amen of the people, the bishop utters another, which is properly the consecration prayer. It is certain that this was in constant use in the Church before the Council of Nicæa. We find it in several forms in the "Apostolical Constitutions" and in the early liturgies. Justin speaks, in his

* Διότι καὶ ἡ προσφορὰ τῆς εὐχαριστίας οὐκ ἔστι σαρκική, ἀλλὰ πνευματικὴ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ καθαρά. "Fragment of Pfaff.

† "Οση δύναμις αὐτῷ. Justin, "Apol." i. 67.

‡ Τὰ ὑμ' ἐκείνου εἰς διατροφὴν γενομένα οὐ πυρὶ δαπανᾶν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς δεομένοις προσφέρειν. Ibid. "Dial. c. Tryph." 67.

Dialogue with Trypho, of the "consecration of the Eucharist, which takes place at the moment when the bread and wine are distributed."* This eucharistic act was performed just as the assembly was about to partake of the sacrament. It has been asserted, but upon no authority, that it consisted only of the Lord's Prayer.† It would more probably be the solemn repetition of the very words of the institution of the Lord's Supper;‡ it was certainly not any special benediction of the elements themselves.

When the sacred words have been pronounced, the bread is handed round, and the cup of wine, which has been mixed with water, is passed from one to another. This is the moment of peculiar sacredness. We do not deny that Justin and Irenæus, in the fervour of their mysticism, have employed expressions which may seem to favour the idea of the transformation of the elements, though it would be easy to quote others of an opposite tendency. We have already considered these conflicting expressions in treating of their doctrine, and have come to the conclusion that their theory on this point was indeterminate and vague. Be this as it may, however, it is certain, from their own declarations, that the Eucharist was never regarded by them as a material sacrifice, offered to God as the renewal of the sacrifice

* Εὐχαριστίαν ἐπὶ πολὺ ποιεῖν. Justin, "Dial. c. Tryph." 65; Harnack's Works, quoted, p. 169,

† Bunsen, "Hippolytus," vol. ii. p. 180. The recitation of the Lord's Prayer would be incompatible with the free and spontaneous character of this part of the service. Justin, "Apol." i. 67.

‡ Justin, in the same passage in which he speaks of the eucharistic act, employs in relation to the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper the same expressions which we find in the words of the institution. The bread recals the broken body of Christ, and the cup His blood shed for the remission of our sins. Ibid. "Dial. c. Tryph." c. 70.

of Calvary. It is only the spiritual offering of the Church filled with gratitude for the benefits of its God and Saviour, alike in creation and redemption; it is the sacrifice of prayer in its highest expression, and associated with the elements of bread and wine, which point to the work of the Word in nature, and to His humiliation in a crucified body. The Church of the second century knows no other host than the Christian soul presenting itself to God in the name of Christ.

The service concluded with the singing of a hymn; then the deacons carried the bread and wine to the absent, a custom not devoid of danger to the purity of the institution, since the sufferers might easily imagine that the grace received was not exclusively connected with the spiritual act, but was, in some measure, incorporated in the material elements.

§ 2.—*Public Worship in the Third Century.*

Christian worship remained, in the third century, apparently unchanged. The same order of service was observed with stricter regularity, but primitive liberty was still retained, and there was no approach as yet to the invariable fixity of a liturgical service. It cannot be denied, however, that a great transformation was rife, under the twofold influence of the hierarchical ideas which began to prevail, and the doctrinal deviation which we have already indicated, and to which we need now only advert.

The Fathers of the third century themselves acknowledge that the Christian worship of their day does not altogether coincide with that of earlier times, especially of the apostolic age. Tertullian, speaking of the

changes introduced into the worship of the Church, says that the writings of the apostles will furnish no justification of them. They are the offspring of tradition, fostered by custom,* and have thus become the practice of the Christian faith. We admit, unhesitatingly, the lawfulness of changes in the mode of Christian worship. It is not bound by the type of the first century as by a new Leviticus, and it but vindicates its true liberty when it changes its modes according to the requirements of various ages and nationalities, provided only that there be no derogation from the true spirit of the gospel. But Tertullian would not have found it easy to justify, from this higher point of view, many of the changes which were being inaugurated in the Church of his day.

The principal of these changes was one quite in harmony with the spirit of primitive Christianity, the fundamental principle of which was the distinction between natural birth and the new birth, between unconverted humanity and the true people of God, received into the Church on the avowal of their personal faith. It was the reproduction in the public worship of this sharp line of distinction, the more sacred part of the service being reserved for approved Christians alone. A severe initiation was required before the candidate might cross the threshold of the true sanctuary of the gospel. Baptism alone gave the right to take part in the Lord's Supper, and in the religious service which accompanies it; and baptism was only administered after long trial, terminated by the public renunciation of the

* "Harum et aliarum ejusmodi disciplinarum, si legem expostules scripturarum, nullam invenies. Traditio tibi prætendetur auctrix." Tertullian, "De corona," 4.

world and the devil. Not only is the presence of the profane among the believers at the hour of worship strictly prohibited, but even the catechumens may not sit side by side with the baptised. It is one of the great reproaches addressed to the heretics that they remove prematurely these wholesome barriers, and blend together in the Church the mere hearers with the true priests of Christ, who have qualified themselves to minister by taking part in the eucharistic prayer and in the Lord's Supper.* Origen speaks of this separation as one of the features of Christianity which would most strongly recommend it to the esteem and admiration of thoughtful men. He insists strongly upon its absolute character. He contrasts it with the facility with which philosophers admitted the first comers into their schools. The Church makes a careful scrutiny of the life and tenets of those who seek a place in the ranks of the catechumens, and admits only those who give evidence of purity of life and conduct. These hearers thus approved, are instructed separately till they are judged worthy of baptism, and it is only after this rite, and after they have pledged themselves to live worthily of the Christian name, that they are allowed to share in the higher worship of the Church. Under this careful examination of all the candidates for baptism, those who are not worthy are shut out. Nothing can be more false than to accuse the Church of being a place of concourse for all the vices.† We have

* "Imprimis quis catechumenus, quis fidelis incertum est; pariter audiunt, pariter orant, ante sunt perfecti catechumeni quam edocti." Tertullian, "De præscript." 41.

† Ἰδίᾳ μὲν ποιήσαντες τάγμα τῶν ἄρτι ἀρχομένων, ἕτερον δὲ τὸ τῶν παραστησάντων ἑαυτῶν τὴν προαίρεσιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι βούλεσθαι ἢ τα Χριστιανοῖς δοκοῦντα. Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 51. See Harnack's Works, quoted, pp. 30, 31.

seen in the picture already drawn of the school of catechumens in the third century, that these disciplinary rules were carried out with such severity, that even the preaching was open only to one class of catechumens—those who had passed a second examination more searching than the first by which they had been admitted to receive elementary instruction. The second part of the worship did not begin till all the catechumens and penitents had left the house of prayer, and the deacons had pronounced the sacred words: "Holy things to the holy." It was not that the ceremonies thus reserved for the initiate alone were mysteries, like those of the pagan worship, the secrets of which were not to be divulged under pain of terrible consequences. On the contrary, those who were excluded knew perfectly that all that took place was the celebration of the eucharistic feast, which had for a long time formed a part of the common meal in Christian families, and had been afterwards transferred to the Agape. But it was needful to convey the impression of the solemnity and sacredness of these simple rites, that all might feel that the abuse of them might bring the thunders of Divine wrath upon the offenders, who, to use the strong words of St. Paul, would be eating and drinking unto themselves condemnation. When the Alexandrine Fathers compared the initiation into the Christian Church with that practised in the great schools of Greek philosophy, when they represented it as mainly the induction of prepared minds into a deeper religious knowledge, they fell into a grave error, and spoke rather as philosophical theorists than as Christians; for nothing could be more opposed to the true spirit of the gospel than such

an identification of it with a secret society into which only certain chosen spirits could be admitted. Christianity rejects everything approaching to esoterism as a leaven of human pride; and the pure spiritual milk of its doctrine is as well adapted to nourish the child-like and the ignorant as the wise men and the scribes, who indeed must become as little children to receive it at all. The Christian mysteries have then nothing in common either with the mysteries of Eleusis and Mithra, or with the esoterism of Neoplatonism and Gnosticism. They are hidden from the common view simply because they can be revealed only to the humble and contrite heart, to the purified soul, and because the pearls of truth may not be cast before men of earthly and profane mind. The one condition of admission is true repentance, and in this path the poor publican often takes precedence of the learned doctor.

It cannot be denied, however, that if the absolute separation of the Eucharist from the other parts of Christian worship had its vindication on these high grounds, it might also have the effect of detracting something from that simplicity which was the true glory of the service. There was the danger that, in seeking to preserve it from all contact with the profane, it might become exalted so far above the habitual level of the Christian life, as to appear an altogether exceptional thing, a solemnity absolutely distinct from daily devotion, a heavenly manna having no analogy with the daily bread. It would be but one step further to exalt it into a sacerdotal act, and this step was hastened when the original idea of the Lord's Supper became yet more

modified under other influences, especially by the growth of hierarchical sacerdotalism. These influences, as we know well, were in existence and operation in the Church of the third century.

We have seen that the Lord's Supper rightly understood is primarily eucharistic — a sacrifice not of expiation but of thanksgiving, a memorial of the redemption fully accomplished. All that detracts in any way from St. Paul's great doctrine of the freeness of salvation necessarily reacts upon the Christian sacrament, which loses its eucharistic character in proportion as the sacrifice of Calvary ceases to be regarded as full and final. The Lord's Supper is then no longer the seal of a grace received, but the meritorious complement of an inadequate work; it is no longer simply the recognition of a benefit, it assumes also an expiatory value, and becomes a sacrifice in the Jewish sense. Now we have shown, in our exposition of Christian doctrine, that at this very period the idea of redemption was undergoing a radical and progressive change, even among the best and greatest of the Fathers. This transition, which is only just appreciable in the writings of Justin Martyr, assumes grave proportions in those of the Alexandrine Fathers. They still regard the sacrifice of Calvary as the central and capital fact of redemption, but not as its consummation, because the cross was in their view rather the triumph of holiness over evil than a unique and final act of reparation. This triumph of good over evil is carried on in the good works of the saints, and especially in their sufferings.* Origen does not hesitate

* See "Early Years of Christianity," vol. iii. "Heresy and Christian Doctrine," pp. 333, 334.

to declare that martyrdom is a continuation of the redemptive act, and that the merit of the glorious sufferings thus endured is so much added to the treasure of piety, obedience, and holiness, by which our ransom is purchased. Jesus Christ indeed enriched the Church with incomparable treasure, the pure gold of His spotless life and of His voluntary death. But He has not so filled the measure, that the saints and confessors animated by His spirit, and following in His footsteps, may not add to it. "The souls of those who are slain for Jesus," says Origen, "plead not in vain before the heavenly altar: they become the medium of pardon to the men who seek it. The powers of evil are vanquished by the blood of the martyrs, by their fidelity and their patience even unto death." *

Tertullian adopts the same principles, and presses their consequences still further. He also regards the death of Christ only as the triumph of holiness over evil, and he therefore traces a continuation of the work of redemption wherever he finds holiness, especially in the form of asceticism, to which, as a Montanist, he attaches peculiar value. Fasting and celibacy he considers to possess positive expiatory virtue for sins committed after baptism.† They are veritable sacrifices in the Jewish sense. He says: "I regard as acceptable sacrifices to God, contrition of soul and fastings endured in sordid raiment. The work of righteousness cannot be accomplished without fasting." Virginity, and voluntary chastity in those who have entered the marriage state, have a yet higher value in his eyes, while martyrdom can cover the most glaring sins, and is equivalent

* Origen, "In Johan." vi. 37. † Tertullian, "De jejuniis," 3.

to baptism.* Cyprian shows himself in this respect the too faithful disciple of his illustrious predecessor. He speaks freely of man's satisfying the justice of God by penitence, and atoning for his sins by his tears and almsgivings. Not only do the sufferings of the martyrs avail for the expiation of their sins, but their intercession is of peculiar efficacy for the sins of others.†

These grave alterations of the doctrine of redemption did not receive their direct application to the Lord's Supper till the time of Cyprian. It was impossible, however, that their influence should not soon make itself felt in this direction. It was not only the conception of the work of Christ which was modified in the theology of Tertullian, but also the idea of the Christian sacrifice, which became in his view rather an expiation than a Eucharist. It is designed, according to Tertullian, rather to appease God than to praise Him. It is not so much the free-will offering of a forgiven soul as a partial atonement. This modification of the idea of the Lord's Supper naturally led on to another: if the sacrifice was of an expiatory character, it was natural to see in it a renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary. For this new sacrifice the priesthood is ready, for it has just been reconstituted under the influence of episcopal assumption. We are on the eve of the inauguration of the Catholic Mass, though as yet Christian spirituality may be strong enough to counterbalance these novel influences. The doctrine of the real bodily presence of

* "Nam et sacrificia deo grata jejunia et seras et aridas escas.—Virginitas quoque et viduitas Deo adolentur." "De resurrect. carnis," 8.

† "Operationibus justis Deo satisfieri." Cyprian, "De opera et eleemosyna," c. 5.

Christ in the Eucharist will not be triumphantly established till some centuries later. It is impossible, however, not to perceive the gravity of the innovation introduced under the episcopate of Cyprian. In his writings we find for the first time the idea that the Church offers to God in the Lord's Supper the blood of Christ,* and that the cup is the repetition of the oblation of the cross. How widely different is this from the spiritual and eucharistic sacrifice.

The transformation of the Lord's Supper into an expiatory sacrifice was also facilitated by the custom, in itself admirable, of laying at the feet of the bishop the gifts designed for the succour of the poor and for the various charitable offices of the Church. Cyprian attaches a positive value to Christian almsgiving for the remission of sins committed after baptism, as appears in his treatise on "Good Works and Almsgiving." He says: "What would become of us in the frailty and feebleness of our human nature, if the Divine mercy had not given us the means of purifying ourselves by our alms from the defilements we contract?† The blood of the cross avails to wash away our sins before our return to God: let us bless His clemency who, knowing that we cannot keep ourselves from evil, has thus provided us with a healing remedy. Our sins are expiated by the merits of the mercy which places within our reach the means of appeasing God."‡ Citing the example of Tabitha, the mother of the poor at Joppa,

* "Sanguinem Christi offeri." Cyprian, "Ep." 63, 9.

† "De opera et eleemosyna," c. 1.

‡ "Remedia propitiando Deo ipsius Dei verbis data sunt, operationibus justis Deo satisfieri, misericordiæ meritis peccata purgari." Ibid. 5.

whom Peter raised from the dead, Cyprian exclaims, "Behold what is wrought by the merits of charity."* Almsgiving is thus regarded by the bishop of Carthage as a true sacrifice of expiation and purification, and the eucharistic table, on which the free gifts of Christian charity were solemnly deposited, becomes in his view the altar of expiatory offerings. We see by what inferences the idea of sacrifice began to be applied to the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, as the first offerings of the Christians, long before the doctrine of the transformation of the elements was evolved from the vague mysticism which at first enshrouded it.

It was customary to mention the names of the givers at the time of the celebration of the communion.† They were in this way led to think that they had acquired some special merit by virtue of which they had the foremost share in the expiatory sacrifice offered to God by His Church.

Other names were also mentioned at this sacred hour—the names of the brethren and sisters whose deaths were deplored. The Christians delighted to associate at the Lord's table, the Church on earth with the Church in heaven. Living by anticipation in the unseen world, it seemed to them natural to gather around the table of their crucified Lord the whole family of believers, and to realise that the bonds which united them were not broken by death. This practice also assumed a different character when the Lord's Supper came to be regarded as an expiatory

* "Tantum potuerunt misericordiæ merita." "De opera et eleemoysna," 6.

† "Eccles. Alex. monumenta." "Liturgia divi Marci." Bunsen, "Antenicæna," iii. 112.

sacrifice: a superstitious notion grew up in connection with the mention of the names of the dead. It was imagined that the eucharistic sacrifice was in part offered for them, and had some efficacy in releasing them from the consequences of sin: this idea was fostered by the practice of bringing offerings for them and in their stead.*

This belief only arose in the third century, but it rapidly developed. The Church felt itself encompassed in this solemn moment of its worship by a cloud of witnesses who had already received the crown. Origen has described in eloquent words, which we have already quoted, this mystical and real communion between those who are engaged in the conflict and the triumphant martyrs.† Doubtless such a thought was in itself inspiring, and likely to produce an exalted frame of mind; but it became full of peril when an expiatory value was attached to the merits of the martyrs. The commemoration of their names soon passed into adoration, ascribing to the creature that which belongs to God alone. Then arose by slow degrees the idea of the invocation of the saints, though this was not recognised till long after.

The Eucharist, thus overladen with superstitious ideas, ceased to be more than a very imperfect remembrance of the Lord's Supper; it became a veritable mystery, not a spiritual service in which faith was fortified by the figurative act. The elements were supposed to have acquired an intrinsic virtue, and to be the medium of sacramental grace even after the com-

* "Oblationes pro defunctis, pro natalitiis, annua die facimus." Tertullian, "De corona," 3. † Origen, "De orat." 11.

memorative act was accomplished. Thus the custom of sending the eucharistic bread to the absent was generalised, and this distribution took the place of the earlier practice of observing the Lord's Supper with the sick in their houses.

We must not, however, exaggerate the significance of these changes. Many germs of error, which did not show themselves till long after, are appreciable to us, because we know to what they grew in later times. The worship of the age of which we are speaking was unquestionably tending in a dangerous direction, but it was as yet far from the materialistic formalism into which it subsequently fell. It still preserved its simple and touching beauty; the pure and fervent spirit of the creative age of the Church had not yet grown cold; it breathes in her prayers and hymns, and in that consciousness of the universal priesthood which will soon be lost, but which as yet lives in the hearts of the Christians, and binds together in sacred oneness the Lord's day and the other days of the week, public worship and private devotion, the religious and the moral life.

CHAPTER V.

ARCHÆOLOGY OF THE VARIOUS ACTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

§ 1.—*Public Prayer.*

AFTER this general review of the worship of the Church, it will be well for us to consider separately each of its parts, that we may trace the successive transformations which in time passed upon all.

Prayer, in public worship, did not differ materially from private prayer. The same forms were used. The assembly knelt on ordinary days, after the example of James the brother of our Lord, whose knees became completely callous through prolonged confession of the sins of his people.* On Sunday, and all the days between Easter and Pentecost, an erect position was maintained during prayer, in honour of the resurrection.† Sometimes on special occasions of mourning or humiliation, the Christians prostrated themselves with their faces to the earth.‡ A sitting posture was forbidden. There was even to be some interval before resuming the ordinary attitude, "lest," says Tertullian, "the angel of prayer who still stands beside us should

* Eusebius, "H. E." ii. 23. † Tertullian, "De corona," 3.
‡ Socrates, "H. E." i. 37.

regard our too evident weariness as an insult to God."*

Men prayed with uncovered heads, thus breaking through the customs of Judaism, which would have condemned such freedom as a want of respect to the holy and dreadful God, whose invisible presence filled the sanctuary like a sacred cloud. The ancient East trembled before the Godhead; hence its priests covered their heads at the hour of sacrifice. The Greek, on the contrary, who came into closer relationship with his gods, whom he regarded as heroic men, did not feel bound to observe these marks of reverential fear. The Christian, in uncovering his head, expressed his filial confidence in the God to whom he had found free access. Women, however, had their heads covered, both to mark their relation of dependence towards their husbands, and also not to attract attention.† Virgins were to be veiled.‡ The Christians raised their hands in prayer, to signify that their souls aspired Godward, and they spread them out, in memory of the hands of the Crucified One.§ Lastly, they bowed the head to, receive the benediction of the bishop.‖

If from the outward form of public prayer we pass to its internal characteristics, we shall be struck first by its great simplicity. The numerous fragments of liturgies which have come down to us bear no trace of oratorical effort or rhetoric. "Stately speech," says Arnobius, "and the learned arrangement of words, belong to political assemblies, tribunals, and the forum:

* Tertullian, "De orat." 12.
† 1 Cor. xi. 4.
‡ Tertullian, "De virgin. veland." 2.
§ Ibid. "De orat." 11.
‖ Κλίνατε καὶ εὐλογεῖσθε. "Const. Apost." viii. 6.

they must be reserved for those who delight in merely verbal display. When we have to do with grave realities there is no scope for ostentation; we have to think of the subject-matter before us, not how we may express it in some agreeable manner. It shows an enervated mind to seek pleasure in serious things, and to think of the harmony of sounds in presence of the sick and the wounded who need healing.*

These rigid rules apply specially to prayer. Thus it avoids all that resembles art, while yet preserving its beauty. The dignity of holy Scripture, the grandeur of prophetic images, and the sweetness of the gospel honey all blend in it. The Divine word bears it heavenward as the eagle bears the eaglet on its mighty wings, to use one of the sublime and tender metaphors of the Bible. The prayer of the early Church is, in fact, fed and nourished on Scripture, the sacred texts being constantly reproduced either by literal quotation or by allusion. The simplicity of the prayers forbids long periods, but they are equally free from dulness and abruptness. Frequent repetitions occur, the outpourings of the deepest and tenderest emotions of the soul. As in a musical composition the principal theme recurs again and again, so in prayer we catch at frequent intervals the one dominant note, like the recurring lap of the wave on the shore, and the repetition prolongs the impression, which might else die away too soon.

The second characteristic of public prayer is that it is intelligible to all, and couched therefore in the current language of the people. The Pentecostal tongues of fire which descended on the first Christians did not

* Arnobius, "Disput. advers. Gent." i. 58, 59.

prevent each celebrating the praises of God in his own tongue.* No sacred language was given to the Church, nor was any peculiar sanctity attached to Hebrew or to the Aramaic tongue used by our Lord Himself. Three of the Gospels were written in that Greek idiom which had been the instrument of conveying the highest culture to the Gentile world. St. Paul wrote and preached in the same language. Latin, that iron tongue which had so often uttered the decrees of persecution, and which seemed, in its rigidity and strength, forged to bind mankind in fetters, was alike employed in the prayers which the Church addressed to God on behalf of the Cæsars, its persecutors. Origen says: "The Hellenists use Greek in their prayers, the Romans Latin: thus each prays to God in his own tongue, and praises Him as he is able; and the Lord of all kindreds and tongues hears these various utterances as if they were but the voice of one soul going up to Him."†

Just as the first effort of Christian missions, even among the most barbarous nations, is to give them a translation of the sacred books, so the first result of the conquests of the Church was to cause the voice of prayer to be heard in new tongues, so that Scythian and Goth, Asiatic and rude African, might echo the words that fell from the lips of pious Roman or Greek. The idea of imposing on Christendom a language not understood, would have seemed strange indeed to the disciples of the apostle who did not even sanction the

* Acts ii. 8.

† *Ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς οἱ μὲν Ἕλληνες ἑλληνικοῖς, οἱ δὲ ῥωμαῖοι ῥωμαϊκοῖς καὶ οὕτως ἕκαστος κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ διάλεκτον εὔχεται τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ὑμνεῖ αὐτὸν ὡς δύναται, καὶ ὁ πάσης διαλεκτου κύριος τῶν ἀπὸ πασῆς διαλέκτου εὐχομενων ἀκούει.* Origen, "Contra Cels." viii. 37.

use of ecstatic speech if it was incomprehensible to the great body of the faithful. The soul of man, enveloped in the heavy atmosphere of earthly things, finds it difficult enough to rise to things Divine, without such obstacles being thrown in its way. The incomprehensible is not a well-chosen medium to assist the soul to reach the invisible.

A third characteristic of public prayer until the close of this period is its liberty. Its place in the service is determined, but it is not fettered by any set form; its aspirations may rise spontaneously, and the words in which they shall be expressed are not predetermined by any fixed formula. The declarations of Justin on this subject met with no contradiction in the following century. Tertullian says: "We pray from our hearts."* The fragments of liturgies which we possess are not prayers, the use of which was obligatory, but simply the living echo of the devotions of the early Church.†

* "De pectore oramus." Tertullian, "Apol." 30.

† An extensive literature has arisen on the subject of the ancient liturgies of the Church, apart from the works which have been written on the liturgical controversy of our own times, especially in relation to the liturgy of Rome. These, dealing altogether with a special subject, have nothing to do with the history of the first three centuries. We have, in the first place, the great work of Renaudot, "Liturgiarum orientalium collectio," Paris, 1725, a work very valuable because of its large collection of documents. We have next the "Codex liturgicus" of Asseman, Rome, 1743. Renaudot, taking as his basis a passage of Basil, to which he gives a forced meaning, asserts that no liturgy was written before the fourth century, and that those which he publishes are all founded on the oral tradition which he traces back to the apostles themselves. The passage of Basil on which this assertion is made to rest runs thus: *Τὰ τῆς ἐπικλήσεως ῥήματα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναδείξει τοῦ ἄρτου τῆς εὐχαριστίας καὶ τοῦ ποτηρίου τίς τῶν ἁγίων ἐγγράφως ἡμῖν καταλέλοιπεν; οὐ γὰρ δὴ τούτοις ἀρκούμεθα ὧν ὁ ἀπόστολος ἢ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐπεμνήσθη ἀλλὰ καὶ ἕτερα ἐκ τῆς ἀγράφου διδασκαλίας παραλάβομεν.* Basil, "De spiritu," c. 27. If this text is taken in its natural sense, it will be seen that it simply declares that the liturgies of Basil's day were not written directly by the apostles, and that they are derived from tradition; but this does not shut out the possibility that there was a more or less faithful ren-

It was not till the Council of Toledo, in 633, that uniformity in worship was enforced by decree, and spontaneous prayer forbidden. We find in the "Coptic Constitution" these remarkable and decisive words assuring the liberty of public prayer: "Let the bishop celebrate the Eucharist according to the forms prescribed above. It is not, however, absolutely necessary that he should use the same words we have employed, or should feel

dering of this tradition in the age following that of the apostles. It is certain that the "Apostolical Constitutions" contain, before the Council of Nicæa, large portions of liturgical services. We may show presently that Origen was acquainted, at least in part, with what is called the liturgy of St. Mark. On the other hand, the liturgies published by Renaudot contain numerous interpolations dating from the fourth or fifth centuries. It is not possible therefore to ascribe them to a tradition of the apostolic age. That which we really gather from the passage of Basil, and from Renaudot's interpretation, is that the liturgies before Nicæa were still indeterminate, and had not assumed a strictly defined form, because worship still preserved, as we have shown, a considerable amount of liberty, though its general outline was fixed.

If we set aside the liturgies of Basil and Chrysostom, as they are called, and which bear the impress of their age and style of rhetoric, we shall see that the liturgies reproduced by Renaudot and Asseman, those at least of the Churches of the East, come under three principal types, the basis of which it is easy to trace.

1. The liturgy of James, sometimes, with a few variations, called by the names of Peter, Matthew, and other apostles and evangelists. This was chiefly in use in Palestine, Syria, and the Asiatic East. The attempt has been vainly made to trace this to the age of the apostles, by the ingenious collation of some parts of it with passages from the apostles or the apostolic Fathers. (See the curious chapter on this question in Neale's book, "Essays on Liturgiology and Church History," London, 1867.) It is far more reasonable to admit that the apostolic text has been reproduced by the authors of the liturgy than to suppose the contrary, especially when we take into account the numberless interpolations in favour of the hierarchy which abound in it, and which are of a much later date.

2. The so-called liturgy of Clement, contained in the eighth book of the "Apostolical Constitutions." This, as we have shown in relation to the "Apostolical Constitutions" generally, has undoubtedly an Ante-Nicene basis, overlaid by numerous passages of later date.

3. The liturgy of Mark, in use in the Egyptian Church from the third century, under the Ethiopian form as reproduced by Ludolph. We shall give the precise date when we quote from it.

See also, on the liturgies of the ancient Church, Daniel, "Codex liturgicus ecclesiæ universæ," Leipzig, 1847–53, vol. iv. fasciculus 1, 2; Bunsen, "Analecta antenicæna," vol. iii.; "Hippolytus," vol. ii. 365–399.

himself rigidly bound by them; rather let each one pray as he is able. If any is capable of himself offering a fitting prayer, it is well. But if he who prays does so in accordance with the forms indicated, let no one hinder him, provided that his prayer be in all points according to sound doctrine." * Such were the principles which prevailed in the third century. The use of a liturgy, invariable and obligatory, would have appeared a profanation of prayer, an infringement of the most sacred of all liberties, the freedom of the soul in its intercourse with God. While it might be deemed expedient to enumerate, as the Apostle Paul does, the great subjects which must not be forgotten in prayer, and to distinguish in public worship the time at which general prayer should be offered for all men from that specially devoted to eucharistic prayer; while some of the prayers for use in public worship were formulated for the assistance of the president, who might not be gifted for this service; the principle of liberty in prayer was nevertheless firmly maintained as the inalienable right of every Christian body. The grand liturgical productions of following ages seem sometimes, in their magnificence, to resemble the splendid tombs erected by the synagogue to the prophets whom it had first slain. It was when the spirit of true evangelical prophecy, the fire of free and fervent prayer, had been stifled under an accumulation of forms, that the Church erected these sumptuous monuments of prescribed devotion, which are too often but the cenotaphs of departed piety.

So great was the respect for the freedom of prayer in

* Οὐ πάντως ἀναγκαίων ἐστι τὰ αὐτὰ ῥήματα αὐτὸν λέγειν ἅπερ προειρήκαμεν, ἀλλὰ πᾶς κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ προσεύχεσθω, μόνον ὑγιεινῶς προσεύχέσθω ἐν ὀρθοδοξίᾳ. "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 34.

the early Church, that even the use of the Lord's Prayer, as a formulary, was not made obligatory until after the second century. It is vain to try and deduce any clear evidence to the contrary from the words of Justin Martyr.* The Lord's Prayer appears from the third century in the baptismal service, it being the custom for the neophyte to repeat it on emerging from the waters of baptism, in token of his new sacerdotal dignity. It was also frequently used in the act of consecration at the Lord's Supper. Tertullian and Cyprian regard it as the epitome of Christian doctrine and the model of prayer.†

It was not, however, till the fourth century that it became an integral part of worship, and that any capital importance was attached to its use. St. Augustine speaks of it as the indispensable prayer.‡ The doxology, with which it closes, dates from the same period, for it does not appear in any writing of the Fathers of the third century.

Prayer is often addressed to Jesus Christ. "We pray to Christ," say the Christians of Smyrna, "because He is the Son of God, and we love the martyrs as they deserve our love, because they are His disciples and imitators."§ Origen strongly repudiates the reproach which Celsus casts upon the Christians, that they put

* See Augustine, "Archæology," ii. p. 62.

† "Orandi disciplina." Tertullian, "De oratione," 1. "Qualia orationis dominicæ sacramenta, quam multa, quam magna, breviter in sermone collecta ut nihil omnino prætermissum est, quod non in precibus atque orationibus nostris cœlestis doctrinæ compendio comprehendatur!" Cyprian, "De orat. dom." 9.

‡ "Omnibus necessaria est oratio dominica." Augustine, "Ep. 89, ad Hilar."

§ Τοῦτον υἱὸν ὄντα τοῦ Θεοῦ προσκυνοῦμεν. "Ep. eccles. Smyrn. apud." Eusebius, "H. E." iv. 15.

a man on the same level with God. He vindicates for them the right to address prayer to Him who is one with the Father, who was before Abraham, and who reflected so perfectly the image of God, that to see Him was to see God. He goes on to say: "Celsus is in error when he asserts that because we honour God and His Son, it follows that we honour not God alone, but His servant also. We worship one only God and one only Son of God, His Word and image, and we pay to Him all the honour in our power, by presenting our prayers to the God of the universe through His only Son."* Origen adds that we ought to offer our prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings to God most high, by one great High-Priest, who is the living Word of God, raised above angels and archangels. "To this Word," he says, "we present our prayers." We see that prayer to Jesus Christ is clearly recognised, with this shade of difference, that Origen certainly prefers prayer to God by the Son. The Holy Spirit is invoked in the same way as the Father and Son. We have already remarked that the deep and universal faith in the Divinity of Christ is shown more clearly by these spontaneous manifestations of the piety of Christian antiquity, than by any mere theological declarations. Until the fourth century no name of any creature, angel or saint, ever entered into the prayers of the Church. The mother of Christ was never invoked; she was simply regarded as the lowliest and most blessed daughter of a sinful and redeemed race, and we have to descend into the depths of apocryphal literature to find the first commencements

* Origen, "Contra Cels." viii. 12, 13.

of the extravagant exaltation of the Virgin of Bethlehem.*

The part taken directly by the congregation in public worship was not large, though in principle the right of laymen to teach was recognised. We have seen that the whole assembly joined first in prayer. This was a time of solemn silence, broken by the voice of the president calling for prayer for the various classes and conditions of men, the congregation responding by a sort of refrain. This it did repeatedly in the course of the service, appropriating by the united Amen the prayer offered in its name. This formula was of Jewish origin. Moses had ordained that the people should ratify in this way the maledictions of the law against idolatry.† The Talmud attached peculiar importance to these maledictions, and threatened fearful chastisements on those who should utter them lightly. The Amen was naturally adopted in the Church. St. Paul mentions it, and it occurs constantly as the natural conclusion of any solemn prayer.‡ This response associates the Christian people with their representatives, and thus gives them more than a merely passive share in the worship. St. Augustine says, "The *Amen* expresses our adherence, our consent and ratification. The blood of Christ," he adds, "cries with a great voice from the earth, when all the people who accept it answer Amen!"§

The *Hallelujah* is almost as ancient. It comes down

* Augustine, "Archæology," ii. 27.

† Deut. xxvii. 14.

‡ Πᾶς ὁ μαρὼν λαὸς ἐπευφημεῖ λέγων. Ἀμήν. Justin, "Apol." i. 67. "Ex ore quo *Amen* in sanctum protuleris." Tertullian, "De spect." 25.

§ "Amen proinde nostra subscriptio est, consensio nostra est." Augustine, "Sermo ad popul. contra Pelag."

to us as the most solemn expression of adoration in the ancient hymns of Israel, as the 104th, 113th, and 118th Psalms, which are called the Psalms of the great *Hallelujah.* The heavenly hosts in the Apocalypse use it in their triumphant song.* The Church is at first careful in the adoption of it, fearing that this angelic word, as Anselm of Canterbury calls it, might degenerate into mere empty sound. The Christian East only sang Hallelujah at Easter and at Pentecost. The same rule was observed in the West, and even more rigorously at Rome, where the Hallelujah was sung only on Easter Day. Jerome, on the contrary, heard it everywhere in Palestine—children lisping it in the cradle, labourers shouting it behind the plough.† According to Isidore of Seville, the Church would not translate either the Amen or the Hallelujah, because they were words so sacred and so grand, that John, when he listened to them for the first time in heaven, thought he heard the voice of great waters and of mighty thunderings. St. Augustine, however, thus translates the Hallelujah, "Praise ye the Lord!"‡ The Church received also from Judaism the word *Hosanna.* This occurs for the first time in Psalm cxviii., and its meaning, according to the Septuagint, is "*Save us.*"§ The Hosanna accompanied the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on the day of Palms. It was first heard in the Church on the occasion of the death of James the Just.‖ In the third century it was adopted in public worship.¶

* Rev. xix. 1–6. † St. Jerome, "Ep." 27.
‡ "Laudate Dominum." Augustine, "Sermon de tempor." sermon 151.
§ Matt. xxi. 9-11; Mark xi. 9, 10. ‖ Eusebius, "H. E." ii. 23.
¶ "Const. Apost." xiii. 13.

The *Kyrie Eleison*, "Lord, have mercy upon us," is an echo of the touching prayer of the blind man of Jericho, taken up, as it were, by all the wounded, weary souls who seek their refuge in the compassions of Christ. It was so generally in use in the time of St. Augustine, that it must have been introduced in the age preceding. It is found in some of the most ancient liturgies.* The *Gloria*, the sublime prolongation of the Christmas song of the angels, is also of great antiquity, and received large additions at the close of the third century.† St. Hilary subsequently gave it its ultimate form in the Latin Church. The *Pax Vobiscum* was in use in the time of Tertullian, who bitterly accuses the heretics of profaning it. Cyprian mentions it in one of his letters.‡ The *Dominus Vobiscum*, with the response of the congregation, is of less ancient origin, and was adopted in the West alone, the East preferring the *Pax Vobiscum*.§ The *Oremus*, or invitation of the deacon to the assembly to pray, is mentioned in the "Apostolical Constitutions." The *Sursum Corda* also occurs there.‖ Cyprian positively confirms the use of it in the Church of his day. The *Agnus Dei* is of later date.

It is clear that the assembly took part in the service by means of these brief ejaculations, by which it appropriated the prayers offered in its name.

* "Liturgia Marci." Bunsen, "Antenicæna," iii. 123.

† "Const. Apost." vii. 47.

‡ Tertullian, "De præscript," 11. "Auspicatus est pacem dum dedicat lectionem." Cyprian, "Ep." 38, 2.

§ The Synod of Braga, in Portugal, A.D. 511, renders obligatory the formula, *Dominus vobiscum*.

‖ "Const. Apost." viii. 12.

§ 2.—*Sacred Song and the Reading of the Scriptures.*

The hymn uniting poetry and music forms an important feature of Christian worship. Poetry is admirably adapted by two characteristics for the expression of religious feeling. First, its rhythm gives concentration and increased force to the words used; it is like a strong wind bearing man's utterance upward. Second, it does not limit the idea, like the precision of prose, but opens vague vistas of the unknown, like landscapes fading in dim mysterious distance. In this twofold respect poetry is adapted to express all those mightier instincts of the soul which reach after the invisible. Music, equally obedient to the laws of rhythm, alone has power to enter the regions which words can neither explore nor express, that secret sanctuary of the soul where are formed those aspirations of the higher nature which can be borne to heaven only by the voice of song. The hymn had its special place in Christian worship. It was, more directly than prayer, the voice of the whole assembly, which thus took part actively in the common adoration. Its cradle was not the synagogue, where the frigid service consisted only of reading and prayer, without any intermingling songs of praise.* Christian song comes directly from the temple, the offspring of that grand Hebrew poetry uttered by lips touched by the live coal from off the altar, the sublimest lyric expression ever given to the griefs and yearnings of the human heart.

At first the Church confined herself to the singing of the Hebrew psalms. She remembered that Jesus had sung

* Luke iv. 17; Acts xv. 21.

the Paschal psalm with His disciples in the upper chamber at Jerusalem on that first celebration of the Eucharist which formed for her the highest type of worship. This custom was never abandoned.

In the second book of the "Apostolical Constitutions" we find the following direction: "Let one of the readers chant the hymns of David, and let the people sing after him the closing words." * St. Augustine is not less explicit. "Let us chant the psalm, exhorting one another, and let us all say, with one voice, 'We worship, we bow and humble ourselves before the Lord our Creator.'" † When the Church desired to express such sentiments as adoration and repentance, which are as appropriate to Christianity as to Judaism, she could not do better than take up the immortal words of the psalter of Zion. There could be no fitter utterance of the majesty and power of the Creator God, of His goodness to His children, His merciful protection; no more powerful expression of sacred sorrow for sin. The Psalms are already wet with the tears of the "woman who was a sinner," and breathe in anticipation the fragrance of her precious ointment. They form the most natural utterance of penitent lips seeking and receiving pardon from their God and Saviour. The joy of deliverance rings through many of the Hebrew hymns, and, interpreted by a yet higher deliverance, they formed the most triumphant eucharistic hymns of the Church. We can well understand how gladly the Christians received this heritage of the Old Testament, and how joyfully those hymns would

* "Ετερός τις τοὺς τοῦ Δαβὶδ ψαλλέτω ὕμνους καὶ ὁ λαὸς τὰ ἀκροστίχια ὑποψαλλέτω. "Const. Apost." ii. 57.

† Augustine, "Sermo 10 de verbis apostolic."

resound in the day of fulfilment, which had cheered their forefathers in the long night of waiting, when they watched for the coming of Messiah "more than they that watch for the morning." Thus the Church attested the unity of the two Testaments.

Custom assigned particular psalms to certain days and hours. Thus we know that the Church had her morning and evening psalms.* St. Augustine quotes as an ancient practice, the singing of the twenty-third Psalm on Good Friday.† It appears to have been the duty of the bishop to indicate the psalm to be sung.‡

The Church could not content herself, however, with the Hebrew psalms alone, for it was true of this branch of worship as of doctrine, that Mosaism had brought nothing to perfection. The Christian must find a new form of expression for his own peculiar sentiments. We have seen that, from the apostolic age, the Church had her own hymns, sometimes improvised under the inspiration of the moment, sometimes composed and handed down for her worship. Those spiritual songs of which St. Paul spoke were not mere psalms. In the next century, we learn from the letter of Pliny the Younger that the Christians had composed hymns of praise to Jesus Christ.

There were not only private morning and evening hymns, like those we have already quoted; there were others, adapted for use in public worship. We reproduce two of these, the date of which cannot be accu-

* "Const. Apost." viii. 37; ii. 59. The morning psalm was the 73rd, and the evening the 141st.
† Augustine, "In Ps. xxi.;" "Sermon" 2.
‡ Ibid. "In Ps. cxxxviii."

rately fixed, but which, from the character of the diction, we judge to be of high antiquity.

MORNING HYMN.

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace
To the men of good will.
We praise Thee,
We bless Thee,
We adore Thee, we glorify Thee,
We give Thee thanks,
Because of Thy great glory,
O Lord God,
King of heaven,
God the Father Almighty,
O Lord the Son, only-begotten,
O Jesus Christ!

* * * * *

O Lord God,
The Lamb of God,
The Son of the Father,
[Thou] who takest away the sins of the world
Have mercy upon us!
[Thou] who takest away the sins of the world.

* * * * *

Accept our prayer!
[Thou] who sittest at the right hand of the Father
Have mercy upon us,
Inasmuch as Thou only art holy,
Thou only art Lord,
Thou only art Most High.
O Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Ghost,
Thou (art) the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

EVENING HYMN.

Children, praise the Lord,
Praise ye the name of the Lord.
We praise Thee, we hymn Thee, we bless Thee,
Because of the greatness of Thy glory.
O Lord the King, the Father of Christ,
Of the spotless Lamb, who taketh away
The sin of the world,
To Thee belongeth praise,
To Thee belongeth song,
To Thee belongeth glory, to [Thee] the God
And Father, through the Son, in the Spirit,
To [Thee] the Most Holy, unto ages of ages.
Amen. *

Some such form would naturally be assumed by the hymns of the early Church. We shall not find any attempt at originality of thought or beauty of expression. They are simply repetitions of the facts of the sacred narrative, prolonged echoes of the first gospel hymn that resounded over the plains of Bethlehem. The early Christians did not find any monotony in these simple hymns of praise, because their hearts were full of adoration that delighted thus to pour itself forth. Apart from this devotional fervour, the hymns would be but empty words, devoid of any beauty, useless sails, flapping idly against the mast, no longer filled with the wind of heaven.

Tertullian † and Origen refer to the existence of these ancient hymns. "Celsus," says Origen, "maintains that we should better honour the most high God if we sang hymns to the sun and moon. We know that it is

* Bunsen, "Antenicæna," iii. 86, 89.
† "Sonant inter duos psalmi et hymni." Tertullian, "Ad uxor." ii. 9.

otherwise, for we offer our adoration only to the God who reigns over the universe, and to His only Son; and thus we praise Him and His only Son, as do the sun and moon and all the host of heaven; for all these heavenly hosts, like a celestial choir, unite with just men in worshipping God and the Son of God.* We see, then, that God and Christ were the sole objects of adoration in the hymns of the Christians. Thus, when Paul of Samosata allowed hymns to his praise to be sung in his church at Cæsarea, he called down universal reprobation.†

The hymns of the Church appear to have rapidly multiplied at this period. We read in an ancient document, quoted by Eusebius: "A great number of psalms and hymns have been from the beginning written by the Fathers to the praise of the Word of God, who is His Christ."‡ These were not only sung in the churches, but, according to Clement of Alexandria, the Christians loved to repeat them, at all times and under all circumstances, while they worked and when they journeyed.§ "Do you ask for hymns and songs?" says Tertullian to the Christians whom he would persuade to forsake the theatres: "we have them in abundance."‖ The greater part of these Christian poets are unknown; only Athenagoras and Nepos are mentioned.¶

* Ὑμνοῦμέν γε Θεὸν καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ αὐτοῦ. Origen, "Contra Cels." viii. 67. † Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 30.

‡ Ψαλμοὶ δὲ ὅσοι καὶ ᾠδαὶ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὑπὸ πιστῶν γραφεῖσαι ἀδελφῶν. Ibid. v. 28.

§ Γεωργοῦμεν αἰνοῦντες, πλέομεν ὑμνοῦντες. Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." vii. 17, 35. Comp. Origen, "De orat." 2.

‖ "Si scenicæ doctrinæ delectant, satis versuum est, satis etiam canticorum, satis vocum." Tertullian, "De spectacul." 29.

¶ Basil, "De spiritu sancto ad Amphil." c. 29; Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 24.

The value attached to these early Christian hymns is proved by the fact that the heretics sought to have theirs also, that they might not be deprived of so great an advantage. Paul of Samosata was led on to the daring innovation just mentioned by his opposition to the orthodox hymns, which did not coincide with his Unitarian views.* The Gnostic Bardesanes composed some hymns, full of his pantheistic dualism. † Other Gnostics appear to have imitated him.‡ Apollinaris also wrote hymns. §

We know but little of the music to which these early Christian hymns were set. Most of them were sung by the whole congregation. It subsequently became the practice for the assembly to listen to the presiding minister, and only to repeat, as a sort of refrain, the closing words. Even this custom, which was made a rule by the Council of Laodicea, with a view to the elevation of the clergy, does not appear to have been generally adopted.‖ Chrysostom declares emphatically that in the earliest ages of the Church, as in his time, all voices joined in the hymns. "Men, women, and children," he says, "are distinguishable only by their manner of singing, for the spirit which directs the voice of each blends all into one strain of melody." ¶

Christian antiquity, however, was familiar with the refrain, and especially with the alternate chants, in which two choirs answered each other. This mode of singing appears to be of very ancient date, at least

* Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 3. † Sozom. "H. E." iii. 16.
‡ Tertullian, "De carne Christi," 20; Irenæus, "Adv. hæres." iii. 15.
§ Sozom. "H. E." vi. 25. ‖ "Concil. Laodic." c. 15.
¶ *Συνηχεσαν τὸ παλαιὸν ἅπαντες καὶ ὑπέψαλλον κοινῇ τὴν ἑκάστου φωνὴν τὸ πνεῦμα κεράσαν, μίαν ἐν ἅπασιν ἐργάζεται τὴν μελωδίαν.* Chrysostom, "Homil. 36, in Corinth."

in Syria, for according to a legend recorded by the historian Socrates, it was revealed to Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, in a vision, in which the heavenly choirs appeared to him arranged in this order. This vision was only a reproduction of the ecstasy of the prophet Isaiah and of the magnificent descriptions of the Apocalypse. It is certain that alternating chants are to be traced back as far as the second century, whether or not they are to be attributed to Ignatius.* The West did not adopt them till much later, probably under the influence of Ambrose, who was the great master of sacred song in the fourth century.

The Christians must have had recourse for their melodies to the music of the Jews and Greeks, but it is impossible to ascertain the proportion in which the two were blended, or the character of the result. Musical art in Judæa was grand and solemn rather than varied; in Greece it had been more widely cultivated. Music was there held in high esteem. Pythagoras regarded it as an echo of the universal harmony of the spheres; and Plato, in his ideal republic, represented it as not a mere embellishment of life, but a means of moral education, giving the sense of measure in all things. The great classical music had the same chaste beauty, the same purity of form, which we admire in the statuary of Phidias.

Vocal music, which alone was used in the primitive Church, had none of those resources of harmony at

* Socrates, "H. E." ii. 8. Theodoret, "H. E." iii. 24, asserts that alternate chants were only introduced at Antioch, under Constantine, by the monks Flavianus and Diodorus. The contradiction between Socrates and Theodoret is explained by Theodore of Mopsuestia, quoted by Nicetas, who dates from the fifth century the translation from Syriac into Greek of the alternate chants. Nicet. "Thesaur. orthod." v. 30.

command which high art has adopted in modern times. The science of harmony had made but little progress; the chant never extended over more than two octaves, and was generally restricted to one. The music was always subordinate to the poetry, and was chiefly recitative. The choral chant was sung in unison, with only the difference of octave between the voices of the men and women.*

M. Gervaert well says: "In the music of ancient Greece it is not the magic of concerted sounds, the impressive effect of the harmony, which constitutes the value of the work; but the purity of tone, the beauty of the melody, the perfect adaptation of the rhythmical form to the sentiment expressed. A melodious idea, sober in outline and expression, indicating the general feeling by some simple and exquisite points, accompanied by a few harmonic intervals—such is the work of the ancient composer. If it is asked how it was possible out of such primitive elements to create really beautiful works, we reply by simply referring the reader to some of the early Christian compositions—the *Te Deum*, for example.†

The character and object of Christian worship led the Church to reproduce this simple art, so pure and so well adapted to her sacred songs. She was the guardian of the best traditions of classical music in an age when degenerate art, borrowing from the East and still more largely from Egypt, sought by the combination of instruments and of voices to excite and stimulate

* Friedlander, "Roman Manners from the reign of Augustus to the age of the Antonines." Translation of Ch. Vogel, vol. iii. pp. 356, 357.

† "History and Theory of the Music of Antiquity." By Aug. Gervaert. Ghent, 1875. vol. i. p. 35.

evil passions, especially in the luxurious feasts, which, like the theatres and pantomimes, were the nurseries of all vice.*

Instrumental music was banished from Christian worship till the peace of the Church. According to Clement of Alexandria, the human voice is the only harp worthy of the Word of God.† He would have all Christians carefully avoid, even in their own houses, any approach to elaborate and secular music. He says: "We may allow music only in moderation: we must eschew above all things those soft harmonies and artifices of practised vocalists, that intoxicate the soul with unholy delights."‡ These rules laid down for family festivities applied with still greater force to the public worship of the Church, and the Christians appear to have conformed to them until the fourth century. "The primitive Church," says Isidore of Seville, "sang in such a manner that the modulations of the voice scarcely rose above the speaking tone."§ Paul of Samosata appears to have departed from this primitive simplicity, introducing into the Church choirs of women, whose singing might add to the meretricious display in which he delighted. If we may judge from the description given us by St. Augustine of sacred song in the age of St. Ambrose, and of the profound impression it produced upon him when he had not yet

* Clement of Alexandria, "Pædag," ii. 4, 44; Friedlander, work quoted, vol. iii.

† Clement of Alexandria, "Strom." ii. 4, 43.

‡ *Καὶ γὰρ ἁρμονίας παραδεκτέον τὰς σώφρονας, ἀποτάτω ὅτι μάλιστα τὰς ὑγρὰς ὄντως ἁρμονίας.* Ibid. "Pædag." ii. 4, 44.

§ "Primitiva Ecclesia ita psallebat ut modico flexu vocis faceret psallentem resonare ita ut prononcianti vicinior esset quam canenti." Isidore of Seville, "De eccles. offic." i. 5.

renounced paganism, we must conclude that sacred music must have made rapid progress, since it had attained such a degree of perfection in the fourth century. The brilliant pagan rhetor shed tears of delight as he heard the alternating chants of the Church of Milan.

What emotions may not have been produced, at the period of the great conflicts of Christianity, by the singing of very simple hymns, rendered sublime by the united voice of numbers, and poured forth as the cry of the Church militant.

The reading of the holy Scriptures formed, as we have seen, a very important part of the service of the Church. During the apostolic age it was confined to the Old Testament, as the only canonical book then recognised; but when the letters of the apostles were received by the different Churches, the reading of these was added. In the time of Justin the Gospels were regularly read.* This part of the service was considered of such importance, that a special office was created for it. The enemies of the Church acknowledged the value of the sacred writings by the bitterness with which they sought their destruction, as in the edict of Diocletian, which condemned them to the flames.†

The bishop appointed the passage of Scripture to be read,‡ but the lessons were not fixed at first, as they were subsequently, for the whole course of the ecclesiastical year. The books of Scripture were read through continuously, the reader exercising his judgment where

* Justin, "Apol." i. 67; Tertullian, "Apol." 39; Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 45–50; "Const. Apost." ii. 57.
† Eusebius, "H. E." viii. 2.
‡ Augustine, "Archæology," vol. ii. p. 197.

to stop, as the division into chapters had no existence as yet. There can be no doubt, however, that in the great festivities of the Church the Scriptures appropriate to them were read: we find this to have been a rule in the time of St. Augustine.* We should conclude from the Homilies on Job, ascribed to Origen, that in his day the Book of Job was the subject of reading and meditation during the anniversary of the Passion.† The canonical books alone were to be read in public service up to the close of the third century; but there was so much uncertainty at this period as to what constituted the canon, that the departures from this rule were probably frequent. Thus "Pastor Hermas" was long in great favour with the Churches, as were also the First Epistle of Clement, the apocryphal writings of St. Peter, and the "Apostolical Constitutions." ‡ A distinction was made between the gospels and the epistles: the desk from which the gospel was read was notably higher than that used for the epistles. The reading of the sacred books was listened to in a standing§ posture, and prefaced by the words, "Peace be with you." The "Acts of the Martyrs" were read on their feast days.‖

* Augustine, "Expositio in 1 Johann."

† "Similiter autem et in conventu Ecclesiæ in diebus sanctis legitur passio Job, in diebus jejunii, in diebus in quibus in jejunio et abstinentia sanctam Domini nostro Jesu Christi Passionem sectamur." "Anonym. in Job liber i.;" Origen, "Opera," Huel's edition, vol. ii. p. 851.

‡ Eusebius, "H. E." iii. 3, 16, 25; iv. 21; vi. 14.

§ "Const. Apost." ii. 57.

‖ Tertullian, "De coron." 3. "Quoties martyrum passiones et dies anniversaria commemoratione celebramus." Cyprian, "Ep." 39, 3. The closing words explain the reading of the "Acts of the Martyrs." Comp. Eusebius, iv. 15; v. 4.

§ 3.—*Preaching.*

Christianity is the religion of the Word, the Divine Word, the express image and perfect reflection of the eternal Spirit. It is fitting therefore that in Christian worship a prominent place should be given to the words of Him who is Himself the only living, personal, creative Word. As the religion of the Spirit is free from all pantheistic materialism, Christianity addresses itself primarily to the mind and to the will. Now speech is the organ of the mind, by which the mind is first, as it were, made conscious of itself by finding its proper expression, and is then brought into contact with other minds. It acts upon the will without laying any coercion upon it. The moral world has no nobler instrument, none better adapted to its ends. Words are the medium of all the relations between free beings, including the holiest of all—the relation between our souls and God. The more directly a religion emanates from God and bears the impress of His spirituality, the more important will be the place it assigns in its worship to language, by which I mean not a mere formulary or repetition, but that which conveys thought and feeling. Hence sacrifice itself finds its highest expression in the utterance of prayer.

Even prayer is inadequate; for, as we have shown, adoration carries us beyond all that is finite and definable into the mysterious region of things that cannot be uttered. Yet it can never be pure ecstasy, in which thought and will are alike lost. It must ever feel its foundation in the historical facts of Scripture, and

find its consummation in those acts of willing service to which it is exhorted by the Word.

Christianity is not like the religions of nature, intercourse between a material deity and his worshippers. In these religions rites take the place of prayer, and preaching has no existence. The heavy smoke of the holocaust must go up to the pagan god; none would dream of pleasing the deaf idol of stone or wood by speaking to it. It must be appeased, if at all, by sacrifices, gross and material as itself, and the priest's work is done when he comes down from the altar on which the blood has been shed. He has no morality to preach in a religion framed to dispense with morality.

For all these reasons, preaching is the glory and the necessity of Christianity, which aims to make saints by revealing the holiness and love of the God of the gospel. Worship may not consist of preaching alone, or it becomes a mere school of philosophy; but neither, on the other hand, can preaching be despised without the tone of the service being lowered. Public worship should not be mere ritual nor mere preaching; both should blend in producing the *rationabile obsequium*—the obedience of the free and reasonable creature.

In the primitive age of Christianity, preaching properly so called is unknown. This is the age of inspiration. Utterance is free, spontaneous, fervent, and irrepressible in the assemblies of the Christians. There is the full exercise of the gift of prophecy, the miraculous manifestation of the Divine Spirit. When this impassioned utterance subsides, it is for a long time followed only by simple testimony borne to the great facts of redemption, the brief, heartfelt recital of the gospel story,

which is not at this time embodied in any written documents of a canonical character. Preaching only commenced when the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit had become rare, and when recourse was had to the newly written sacred books. Without losing its primitive simplicity, the teaching in the Churches now assumed a different character, and demanded in the preachers, not only the enthusiasm of the moment, but previous meditation and preparation. Preaching occupied from this time a regular place in public worship. It was closely connected with the reading of the Scriptures, which it was designed faithfully to interpret, for the instruction and edification of the people. Hence it could not well become a mere dissertation or oratorical harangue. It retained this expository character not only in the second, but in the third century. The preacher did not choose an isolated verse of Scripture, and make this the basis of his teaching: he took as his subject the whole passage which had been read. The homily preceded the sermon, properly so called, which was not introduced till a much later date.* All Origen's discourses are called homilies, a title which signifies an address to a mixed assembly.

The preaching of the second century bears an exact resemblance to that which was delivered in the Jewish synagogue after the reading of the Scriptures. Christ Himself had given the model of this preaching in the synagogue of Capernaum, when He expounded His own mission from one of the grand texts in Isaiah, which He had just read in the audience of the people.†

* "Ὁμιλος signifies mixed assembly. The word ὁμιλήσας occurs in Acts xx. 11; Augustine, "Archæol." vol. ii. p. 243. † Luke iv. 16, 18.

The preacher was either the bishop himself or one appointed by him. No layman, not even Origen, could fill the office, unless invited and authorised by the bishop.* The bishop preached from his elevated episcopal seat; the preacher sometimes occupied the place vacated by the reader.† The hearers appear during the second and third centuries to have remained seated; in the fourth century the custom was introduced of standing to listen.‡ The discourse was also often commenced by the elders of the Church, and concluded and summed up by the bishop.§ In no case was a woman allowed to preach,‖ except among the heretics.¶

Paul of Samosata is severely blamed for having allowed applause in the church.** The homily, during the whole of this period, was not a written discourse, but a free improvisation. The discourses of Origen were taken down by rapid scribes, and revised by himself.†† This custom was long continued. St. Augustine relates that one day, the reader having mistaken the passage to be read, he at once adapted his discourse to the Scriptures thus wrongly given. The homily is primarily exegetical and practical. Justin Martyr brings out the latter characteristic when he says that the preacher urges his hearers to imitate the holy examples he has brought before them.‡‡

* Eusebius, "H. E." vi. 19.

† Socrates, "H. E." vi. 5; Sozom. "H. E." viii. 5.

‡ "Const. Apost." ii. 57. *Ἔπειτα ἀνιστάμεθα κοινῇ πάντες.* Justin Martyr, "Apol." i. 67.

§ *Καὶ ἐξῆς παρακαλέιτωσαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τὸν λαὸν καὶ τελευταῖος πάντων ὁ ἐπίσκοπος.* "Const. Apost." ii. 57.

‖ Ibid. iii. 9; Tertullian, "De præscript." 41. "Non permittitur mulieri in ecclesia loqui." Ibid. "De virgin. veland." 9.

¶ Montanism assigned an important place to women.

** Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 30.

†† Ibid. vi. 36.

‡‡ Justin, "Apol." i. 67.

Tertullian describes the object of preaching to be to nourish faith, to quicken hope, to incite to a sterner exercise of discipline, to rebuke, to exhort, to bring the teaching to bear upon the circumstances of the time, and to draw from it lessons for the future.* Origen says: "We endeavour by the reading of holy Scripture, and by the interpretation of it, to nurture piety and its attendant virtues, by weaning our hearers from the contempt of Divine things, and from all which is not consistent with the word of truth."† Without imitating in any way the esoterism of pagan philosophy, which was but a proud assumption of the aristocracy of intellect, the Church made a difference between those hearers who were still novices, catechumens of the lowest grade, and those who had received a complete course of instruction, especially the baptised. The former class were to be shown their errors, and raised from the worship of the creature to the adoration of the holy God, and to the knowledge of the Saviour predicted by the prophets and proclaimed by the apostles. The latter class took part in the true Christian worship, which might not be even witnessed by eyes profane, and to these disciples were unfolded those higher verities of Christian truth which would have been incomprehensible to them before. Yet this higher and deeper teaching was not made any secret, for it was to be found in substance in the homilies published by the great doctors of the Church.

The form of the religious discourse was in harmony

* "Certe fidem sanctis vocibus pascimus, spem erigimus, fiduciam figimus, disciplinam densamus præceptorum nihilominus inculcationibus." Tertullian, "Apol." 93.

† Διὰ τῶν διηγήσεων προτρέποντες μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν εἰς τὸν Θεὸν εὐσέβειαν. Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 57.

with its design. As it was directed primarily to the conscience, and intended to stimulate spiritual life in a persecuted Church, which was like an army waiting on the eve of battle for the inspiring charge of the commander, so the preaching in the primitive Church gave no scope for lengthened displays of oratory. "Let us leave for the harangues of the rostrum, the facile eloquence which glories in the multitude of words," says Cyprian. "When we have to speak of our God and Saviour, we will use an unadorned sincerity of speech. Faith is not strengthened by displays of oratory, but by the truth itself. We should aim not to make long dissertations which may charm a popular audience by the flowers of rhetoric, but to find weighty words which, presenting the truth in its naked simplicity, are such as become the gospel of Christ. Let us seek to reach the heart more than the mind."*

The rules which St. Augustine subsequently laid down for the preaching of his day only expressed in the form of precepts that which had been the ancient practice of the Church, and we find in them a faithful representation of what preaching was in the third century. "The interpreter of holy Scripture," he says, "the defender of the true faith, and hence the opponent of error, should teach men how they may do good and avoid evil." His teaching should have for its aim to reclaim the wandering, to arouse the negligent, and to teach the ignorant both what they should do and eschew. If his hearers need to be instructed, let him proceed by consecutive narration thoroughly

* "Accipe non diserta, sed fortia. Accipe quod sentitur antequam discitur." Cyprian, "Ad donat." 2.

to explain things. If there are doubters who need to be brought back to the faith, let him bring the force of argument to bear on the subject. When the hearers need more to be warned than to be instructed, when they require to be urged not to show themselves negligent in the practice of that which they already know, then the appeal should be made with redoubled energy. In such a case the preacher must use prayers, reproofs, threatenings, objurgations; in a word, every influence which is capable of moving the heart."*

We see then that it is the ruling principle of the homiletics of the early Church that the preacher should always keep before him the greatness of the spiritual result to be obtained. The precept of the poet is instinctively carried out: *Festinat ad eventum.* Hence the entire absence at this period of that empty and pompous rhetoric which was the curse of the age of decadence, when fine speakers, as Apuleius declared, took the place of rope-dancers, amusing an effeminate people with tricks of language as void of serious purpose as the feats of acrobats. The preaching of this primitive period was no less remote from the ponderous ratiocinations of the schoolmen, that pedantry of logic in which sophistry delighted, and which is to philosophy what rhetoric is to eloquence. To trifle away hours over these spiritual gymnastics was to lose souls. Christian preaching was no less superior to the forensic eloquence of antiquity, always bitter and vindictive. It was not, however, wanting in passion, though it was raised above the petty animosities of men, for its fervour might well be fed by the remembrance

* Augustine, "De doctrina Christian." iv. 4.

of the glorious cause it had to plead, not before a human tribunal of fallible and venal judges, but before that supreme tribunal which Tertullian describes at the end of one of his most eloquent treatises, and on which he shows us the Judge of all the earth ready to deliver His final sentence. The speaker has to plead with immortal souls to escape while yet there is time this awful condemnation. Such a charge leaves no scope for florid speech; it demands the full fervour of the soul directed towards the end to be attained.

The discourses of the second and third centuries may be divided into three classes: first, the homilies properly so called; second, the apologetic discourses addressed to unbelievers, and intended as an introduction to catechetical teaching; and third, the panegyrics of the saints and martyrs delivered on the anniversaries of their suffering. The homily preserved the primitive simplicity more strictly than the two other classes of address. The great Apologies which have come down to us are far more ornate than the apologetic discourses delivered before a Christian audience: they are elaborated into books. They give us some idea, however, of what must have been the living teaching of the apologists when they addressed Pagans well disposed to the new doctrine. They are often very comprehensive and beautiful in form without losing their simplicity. I would cite as an example the conclusion of the "Philosophoumena" of St. Hippolytus. When addressing himself to his contemporaries of every nation, he urges them to abandon the idle sophisms and fallacious promises of the heretics, and to yield to the simple suasion of calm,

uncoloured truth. The panegyrics of the martyrs, as we gather from the fervid treatises of Tertullian and Cyprian, rise to an oratorical tone, not through any literary affectation, but through the almost fanatic enthusiasm aroused by the confessors.

We have an admirable example of panegyric in Origen's eulogium of his disciple, Gregory Thaumaturgus. Nothing could be more sincere than his admiration, and yet he does not escape the fatal weakness of this style of writing to which simplicity seems impossible. Let us understand clearly, moreover, what is the simplicity of the homily. It consists mainly in the absence of any attempt whatever at oratory, but it does not exclude that intellectual subtlety which was natural to the Greek mind, especially at Alexandria. Origen declares with the utmost sincerity that he has in view nothing but the edification of his hearers. He does not conform to any rules as to exordium or peroration. His discourse, which immediately follows the reading of the text, is broken off abruptly when the time for preaching is passed, and he resumes his subject the next day exactly at the point where he left it. Sometimes he would give two homilies in succession, or would stop suddenly in the midst of an argument to ask the prayers of his hearers.* He enjoins them not to be led by him when he speaks not in accordance with the gospel. But this simplicity of aim does not prevent his making unhesitating use of the allegorical method, seeking three meanings for each text, and giving fanciful inter-

* "Hic scripturæ locus difficillimus est ad explanandum, sed si orationibus vestris Deum patrem Verbi deprecemini, ut nos illuminare dignetur, ipso donante poterit explanari." Origen, "In Levitic." Homil. xii. 4.

pretations, often containing the elements of sublime poetry, as in his exposition of the Song of Songs, in which he sees the symbol of the espousal of the soul to the Word. As soon as he comes to the spiritual application of the text, he is again simple and impressive. We feel that he was supremely desirous to make his words the echo of his life, and that it was to this cultivation of piety he attached the chief importance. This is the true eloquence of the saints. The Latin preaching must have been from the first more simple in thought and more brilliant in form, if we can judge by the Christian literature of both languages that has come down to us. In spite of his protestations, Cyprian carries some vestiges of the eloquence of the pretorium into the pulpit of the church, as Tertullian had used in the same position the eloquence of the tribune, lifting his hand against all abuses and usurpations. The spoken discourses of the fiery African were doubtless, like his writings, lacking in taste and clearness; but they would be sure to exhibit the peculiar brightness and force of his style, and to abound in those striking antitheses in which he set forth the contest of two worlds for the soul of man. Heresy also had its preachers. The Clementine Homilies are not wanting in facile eloquence, but they exhibit neither clearness of doctrine nor force of language. At the close of the third century preaching begins to be considerably modified. If bishops like Ambrose and Chrysostom sustained in the following age its vigour and beauty, while enriching it by a varied and brilliant culture, court bishops like Eusebius adopted a redundant rhetoric, and often fell into the platitude of servile panegyrics.

§ 4.—*Agapæ—Marriage and Funeral Rites.*

We need not speak again of the two sacraments of the Church—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—as we have already dwelt on them at length. There was no trace at this period of any other sacrament in the true sense of the word. Neither public confession nor consecration to the various offices in the Church assumes this character.

We have seen that the Agape was separated from the Lord's Supper from the time when Pliny the Younger thought it necessary to bring the severe laws of the Empire to bear on these Christian societies. A distinction must be observed between the two classes of Agapæ: the one were celebrated in Christian homes, the other were simply a part of the funeral observances in the catacombs on the occasion of burials. The former had preserved the character of worship. The Scriptures were read and the praises of God sung.* The abuses already pointed out in the apostolic age in connection with these feasts were aggravated. Thus the rich sometimes made an insolent display which humiliated the poor.† But the institution retained its primitive beauty, and was still regarded as the festival of charity wherever the spirit of love prevailed. The religious character of the Agape is brought out very beautifully in the "Constitutions of the Egyptian Church."

The presence of a bishop or elder, or failing either of these, that of a deacon, is regarded as necessary, in order

* Tertullian, "Apol." 39. "Sonet psalmos convivium sobrium." Cyprian, "Ad donat." 16.

† Clement of Alexandria, "Pædag." ii. 1, 4.

that the benediction of the representatives of the Church may solemnly consecrate the brotherly repast. Each guest, before drinking the cup placed before him, is to lift it towards heaven in token of thanksgiving, and is to make mention in prayer of the name of the brother who has bidden him to his table. He is to remember that he is the salt of the earth, and that he must not, by forgetting the rules of most scrupulous sobriety, grieve his host, who has been desirous of gathering together a holy assembly. This feast of love is to be taken in gentleness, without disputing, and in silence, unless the bishop addresses some questions to his brethren. The catechumens are allowed to share in it.* If the Agape is conducted throughout in the spirit of Christian love and thankfulness, it is in itself a veritable Eucharist.†

Sometimes the deaconess-widows are invited to the Agape, but on two conditions only; first, that the feast be not prolonged after sunset; and, second, that the elders connected with their Church accompany them; otherwise they are to receive the elements at home.‡

The Agapæ in the catacombs were intended to take the place of those feasts which played so important a part in the habitual rites of the funeral companies, the usages of which were adopted as far as possible by the Church, in order that she might share in the exceptional immunities which they enjoyed. Recent excavations in the catacombs of Domitilla have disclosed the hall of the Agape arranged for the funeral repast. These funeral ceremonies, which must not be

* "Const. Egypt." ii. 48-50.

† Ἕκαστος δὲ ἐσθιέτω ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ. Ibid. 51.

‡ Ibid. 52.

confounded with those on the anniversaries of the dead, were very complicated, if we may judge by the constitution of the Church of Alexandria. It was not considered enough to convey the sacred remains with singing and prayer to the place of burial. Another service was held three days after the interment, in memory of the glorious third day on which the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre. The same rites were repeated seven days after the death, and again a month later, in imitation of the mourning for Moses.*

We have no exact details of the religious ceremonial at the marriages of this period. It is certain that this rite, so fully in harmony with the spirit of Christianity, was observed from the third century. Christian marriage, according to Tertullian, after having been published by the bishop, was celebrated in the presence of the Church. The bride and bridegroom brought a special offering, and their union was then sealed by their partaking together of the eucharistic feast. Their marriage, thus ratified, received the Divine sanction.†

* "Const. Apost." viii. 42.

† "Unde sufficiamus ad enarrandam felicitatem ejus matrimonii, quod ecclesia conciliat et confirmat oblatio, et obsignatum benedictis angeli renuntiant, pater rate habet!" Tertullian, "Ad uxor." ii. 9. "Penes nos occultæ quoque conjunctiones, id est non prius apud Ecclesiam professæ, juxta mœchiam judicari periclitantur." Ibid. "De pudic." 4.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA IN THE THIRD CENTURY.*

HAVING endeavoured, by an attentive study of the documents at our command, to determine the character

* We have two principal authorities for this description of worship in the third century.

1. Chap. lvii. of the second book of the "Apostolical Constitutions."

2. The liturgy, called St. Mark's, as we find it in the Ethiopian edition, published and translated into Latin by Ludolf. It is easy to show that these two documents belong in substance to a period prior to the peace of the Church. We apply to the fragment of the second book of the "Apostolical Constitutions," which we use as an authority, the same remarks we have made in reference to the entire collection, the existence of which before the Council of Nicæa is demonstrated by its essential features. The description which we have given of the house of prayer would not apply to the basilicas of the fourth century. The general arrangement of the worship is in complete harmony with the preceding period, though the additions are numerous. The part of Book viii. of the "Constitutions" treating of the same subject (c. 5–16), though of later date as a whole, contains clear allusions to a time of persecution (*ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ἡμᾶς.* "Const. Apost." viii. 10). The liturgy of Mark, especially in its Ethiopian form, bears traces of the highest antiquity. The first Greek edition is of a somewhat later date. We find in the liturgy of Mark unquestionable allusions to the period of persecution, *Τοὺς ἐν φυλακαῖς ἢ ἐν μετάλλοις, ἢ δίκαις.* "Lit. Marc." Bunsen, "Antenicæna," iii. p. 109. A more significant proof of the age of this document is the literal reproduction of one of the prayers contained in it, in a homily of Origen, who quotes it as actually forming part of the public worship. *Πολλάκις ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς λέγομεν· Θεὲ παντόκρατορ, τὴν μερίδα ἡμῶν μετὰ τῶν προφητῶν δός· τὴν μερίδα ἡμῶν ἡμῖν μετὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων τοῦ χριστοῦ σου.* Origen, "In Jerem." Homil. 16, 14. This prayer appears substantially in this document, with some modifications in the form, which are explained by the fact that at that time no fixed formularies were in use. It is thus epitomised. *Δὸς ἡμῖν μερίδα καὶ κλῆρον ἔχειν μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων σου.* Bunsen, "Antenicæna," p. 113. The reader will further observe, in the liturgy of Mark, direct allusions to

of each of the principal acts of Christian worship, having traced its development and subsequent transformations, it is important for us to rise from details to a general view, as we are enabled to do by the authorities we possess. We will take our standpoint in the time of Origen, about the year 230, when worship still preserved its essential character, though it had received important additions and developments. Let us place ourselves, in imagination, in the great metropolis of Oriental Christianity, which already numbers its converts by thousands.

The house of prayer, probably situated in a remote quarter of the town, as was common in those times of persecution, is an unpretending building. It is, however, sufficiently large to contain the catechumens and the faithful. In the vestibule is the throng of those who are not allowed to cross the threshold: here a cistern, in which the necessary ablutions may be performed, has been placed. The edifice has no columns or chapters, nothing resembling a temple of the ancient type: had it been otherwise, Origen would not have spoken as he did of the absence of any sanctuary among the Christians. Let us notice the plan of the building, which is admirably adapted to the requirements of

local events, such as the overflowing of the Nile. Ποτάμια ὕδατα ἀνάγαγε ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον μέτρον αὐτῶν. Bunsen, "Antenicæna," p. 111.

As we have shown, the public prayers in the third century had not yet assumed a strictly liturgical character: great scope was left for spontaneous expression, although the general plan and the substance of the teaching were always determined by rule. It is to this fixed portion of the service then that we must direct our attention, using full liberty of criticism as to the rest, and rejecting as interpolations all that is not in accordance with the doctrinal and ecclesiastical type of the age, as that is handed down to us by the Fathers of the third century. With these reservations, we believe the document before us will be found to furnish a graphic and faithful representation of Christian worship in the third century.

worship. It is divided into two distinct parts, to maintain the separation between the men and women. A space is reserved at the end of the building for the pulpit of the bishop and the seats of the elders, who surround him. In front of the *cathedra* of the bishop stands the communion table: near it is another table, intended for the offerings of the Church. In the centre of the building are placed two *ambones* or desks, which are to serve for the reading of the Scriptures, that for the Gospel being more elevated than that for the Epistles. The walls are bare, unadorned by either picture or sculpture: a few torches throw a dim light over the whole.

At the hour of worship, which is the first hour of the day, that the soul may present itself to God before being drawn into the whirl of outward life, the catechumens are the first to arrive. Instruction is given them, and then those who have not been approved as hearers retire after fervent prayer offered to God on their behalf. The penitents follow them, and are prayed for in like manner. The Christian assembly gathers in silence: the deacons place the men in one part of the building, while the deaconesses perform the same office for the women. The deacons are responsible for the good order of the service and for the prevention of any interruption of the sacred hour of worship.*

After the opening prayer, the reader ascends the desk. The assembly stands, and, in the attitude of reverent attention, listens to the portions of Scripture appointed by the bishop to be read either from the Old Testament or the Gospels. A psalm is sung between

* Ὁ διάκονος ἐπισκοπείτω τὸν λαόν. "Const. Apost." ii. 57.

the two readings, and after the second reading another psalm is read, the congregation chanting the final words.* In order to give some idea of what the preaching in the ancient Church was, we shall reproduce here in substance a homily of Origen, which has been preserved to us in its original form.

The portion read has been the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac. Origen takes the place of the reader in the desk, for being still a layman, he has not the right to enter the *cathedrâ* of the bishop. He comments on the sacred narrative according to his custom, rather in a style of instructive exegesis than of oratorical effort.

"Give me your attention," he says, "you who draw near to God, and believe you are among His faithful ones. Consider attentively, by the narrative to which you have just listened,† how the faith of believers is tried. 'And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, Behold, here I am.' Meditate on each of these words, for it is by delving into each detail that we find the hidden treasure, and it is sometimes when we are not expecting it that we come upon the most precious things. The patriarch was first called Abram, and yet we never find God giving him this name. This is because God would not call him by a perishable name, but by the name Himself had chosen for him, and this He does twice. When Abraham had replied, 'Here I am,' God said unto him, 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a

* Harnack, work quoted, p. 472.

† "Ex his quæ recitata sunt." Origen, "In Genes." Homil. 8, 1. vol. ii. p. 80.

burnt-offering unto me.' It is as though God would inflame Abraham's heart with love for his son, who is not simply, like Ishmael, his son according to the flesh, but the very subject of the promise. It is this son, on whom depend such glorious prophecies, whom he is commanded to offer up.

"What sayest thou to this, Abraham? What thoughts arise in thy heart? What hast thou to say to the commandment which tries thee? Dost thou not say that if thou art to offer up this child of the promise, thou canst no more hope for its fulfilment? Or, rather, dost thou not think that as He who made it cannot lie, so the promise must stand fast still. St. Paul has revealed to us what was the thought of Abraham, when he says that the patriarch believed firmly that God could raise his son even from the dead. How then can they be the children of Abraham who do not believe in the resurrection already realised in Jesus Christ, when their brother in the faith believed before the event, that his son might rise again?"

The preacher then shows how God, in reminding the patriarch that he asks of him his well-beloved son, turns the sword as it were in upon his own bleeding heart, that the sacrifice being the more agonising might be the more real. It is for the same reason that the terrible commandment is given at the foot of the mountain, that Abraham might be sacrificing himself, as it were, at every step of the long journey. The high place on which he is commanded to offer up Isaac represents those sacred heights to which the soul rises when it surrenders all that is earthly.* "Abraham

* "Ut fide electus terrena derelinquat et ad superna conscendat." Origen, "In Genes." Homil. 3.

rose up early in the morning and went." This is in token of the light which shone in his soul. The three days of the journey, which prefigure the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ, are the passion of his faith.

"During these three days his bowels are torn, as during the long hours he fixes his eyes upon his son, when he breaks bread with him, or when he covers him with kisses during the night, while Isaac sleeps in his bosom.*

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, 'Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.' Tell me, Abraham, art thou speaking truth to thy servants? If thou speakest truth, thou wilt not then offer up thy son? If thou speakest not truth, is it worthy of a patriarch to lie? 'What meanest thou by these words? I lie not,' thou mayest say, 'for I will offer up my son as a burnt-offering, and yet I will come again with him, for I believe that God is able to raise him from the dead.'

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it upon Isaac his son. This wood which Isaac bears typifies the cross which was laid upon Jesus, for the office of the priest is to bear the wood of the sacrifice. Thus was he at once victim and priest.†. . .

"Abraham rears the altar, lays the wood on it, takes his son, and prepares to slay him.

"There are many fathers among those who are listening to me. May this sacred story give some of you

* "Tot noctibus quum puer penderet in amplexibus patris, cubitaret in gremio." Origen, "In Genes." Homil. 4.

† "Fit ergo ipse hostia et sacerdos." Ibid. 6.

such constancy and courage of soul, that when your son shall be taken from you by natural death, even though he be your only and well-beloved child, you may follow the example of Abraham. God does not ask of thee so heroic an act as to slay thy son and offer him for a burnt-offering. Be thou only strong in spirit, and in the quietness of faith offer thy son to God. Present his soul as a sacrifice.* Offer him not in the valley of tears, but on the glorious heights of faith."

After some remarks on the angel who appeared to the patriarch, and who illustrates the beneficent action of those blessed spirits to whom we are confided in our tender childhood, the preacher applies to the persecuted Christians the words addressed to Abraham, "Now I know that thou fearest God."

"If I have behaved myself valiantly in the conflict, if I have made a courageous confession, if I have borne all that is laid upon me, then the angel may say to me, 'Now I know that thou fearest God.' Why was this word spoken to Abraham? Because he spared not his son. Let us remember what the apostle says, namely, that God spared not His own son. Consider how God enters into a glorious competition of generosity with men. Abraham offered to God his only son, and that son was restored to him, while God has given up His immortal son to death for us all.† Which of you who listen to me will hear, in his turn, this word of the angel: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing

* "Fide fixus lætus offer filium Deo. Esto sacerdos animæ filii tui." Origen, "In Genes." Homil. 7.

† "Vide Deum magnifica cum hominibus liberalitate certantem. Abraham mortalem filium non moriturum obtulit Deo; Deus immortalem filium pro omnibus tradidit morti." Ibid. 8.

that thou hast not withheld son or daughter, money, honour, ambition, gain, but hast despised all, hast counted all but dust that thou mightest win Christ: thou hast sold all, and given all to the poor, to follow the Word of God"?

After some allegorical explanations, the homily closes thus. "See what it is to lose anything for God: it is in reality to find that which has been forsaken for His sake multiplied a hundredfold. The gospel promises yet more: it promises, beyond all this, eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory and dominion, world without end."

After the preaching, those who are hearers only, withdraw, and the first part of the religious service closes with the prayer of the assembled congregation, which prostrates itself before God, except on the Sunday and during the Easter festival, when it remains standing, to testify its faith in the resurrection. Its custom is to turn towards the east. Its supplications first rise to God in deep silence. Then the silence is broken by the voice of the officiating minister, who directs the secret prayer by calling to mind those great objects of supplication which should never be forgotten.

"Let us all join," he says, "in prayer to God by Jesus Christ. Let us pray for the peace of the world and for the holy Churches, for the universal and apostolic Church, and for this holy community. Let us pray for all bishops, and for me your bishop, for the elders and deacons. Let us pray for all those who are joined together in marriage, for all women labouring of child. Lord have mercy on them all! Let us pray for all those who bring forth the fruits of charity and show

mercy to the poor, and bring free-will offerings as the first-fruits of all their goods, that they may receive incorruptible treasure in exchange for these perishable things. Let us pray for the confirmation of our brethren newly enlightened. Let us pray for the sick, that they may be healed and preserved to the Church. Let us pray for those who travel by land or by water, for all who are condemned to the mines, or who are in bonds and imprisonment for the name of the Lord, and for those who are doomed to long captivity. Let us pray for our enemies, who hate us and persecute us for the name of Christ, that God may turn their hearts. Let us pray for all such as have erred and gone astray. Let us pray for every Christian soul. Save us, O God, and raise us up in Thy compassion. Let us arise and commit ourselves in the fulness of prayer to our loving God and to His Christ."

Sometimes this prayer is offered by the deacon. In that case, the bishop rises when it is finished and concludes the first part of the service by praying thus:—

"O Almighty God, Thou who inhabitest the highest heaven, O holy God, who dwellest in Thy saints, the one Lord and King, who by the gospel of Jesus Christ hast given us the knowledge of Thy glory and of Thy name, behold Thy flock which is before Thee: keep it from ignorance and from every evil way, give it to walk in Thy fear, to believe in Thee, and to love Thee with true affection. Hear Thou the prayers of Thy people; guard them from evil, be Thou their leader, their keeper, their wall of defence. Save them by Thy truth, Thy word is truth, and grant unto them eternal life. *

* "Const. Apost." viii. 9, 10. Clearly these two prayers belong to the first part of the service, for they correspond exactly with what Justin Martyr

After this prayer, which evidently refers to the edification they might receive from the preaching to which they had just listened, the second part of the service begins. In this not even the catechumens about to be baptized are allowed to share.

"Let the doors be closed," we read in the "Apostolical Constitutions," "that no unbeliever or profane person may enter."* Two deacons guard the gates, so that none but baptized Christians shall come in.†

The eucharistic service is opened by what may be called the offertory. The communicants present their offerings through the medium of the deacons. These offerings consist not only of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, but of the first-fruits of their fields, and of the various gifts of all nature, which are committed to the bishop, as the representative and recognised and approved organ of the charities of the Church, who alone is capable of distributing to the indigent brethren according to their needs. This offering of gifts takes place in perfect silence and in the most orderly manner. Then follows the kiss of peace, given by the men to the men, and by the women to the women. This act, so beautiful in its significance, if it is sincere, is preceded by an earnest word of caution, given by the assisting

has told us of the general prayer offered by the whole assembly. First, they are essentially prayers of intercession, and differ in this respect from the eucharistic prayer presented before the Lord's Supper is celebrated. Then the deacon does not offer the prayer in his own name, but calls upon the congregation to pray itself: "Ὅσοι πιστοὶ κλίνωμεν γόνυ — δεηθῶμεν πάντες, συντόνως τὸν Θεὸν διὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ παρακαλέσωμεν. "Const. Apost." viii. 9.

* Φυλατέσθωσαν δὲ αἱ θύραι μή τις ἄπιστος εἰσέλθοι, ἢ ἀμύητος. Ibid. ii. 37.

† Προσήκει τὰς θυσίας ὑμῶν ἤτοι προσφορὰς τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ προσφέρειν· αὐτὸς γὰρ γινώσκει τοὺς θλιβομένους. Ibid. ii. 27.

deacon. "See that thou hast nothing against thy brother; hypocrisy be far from us!"*

After the offertory and the kiss of peace, which are prefatory to the eucharistic service properly so called, the sacred mystery begins.

The bishop takes his place before the table of the Eucharist and opens the service with these words:—

"*Bishop.*—The Lord be with you.

"*Congregation.*—And with thy spirit.

"*Bishop.*—Lift up your hearts.

"*Congregation.*—We lift them up unto the Lord.

"*Bishop.*—Let us give thanks unto our Lord God. It is very meet, right; and our bounden duty that we should give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God, and that we should celebrate the Eucharist in Thy name. It is meet that our mouth should not cease to glorify Thee day or night, that our lips and heart should keep no silence in Thy praise. O Thou who hast made the heaven and all that is therein, the earth and that which is upon it, the sea, the rivers, the fountains of water, the pools and all that is in them; Thou who hast made man in Thine own image and likeness, and hadst placed him in the bliss of paradise; though he has fallen, Thou hast not despised nor forsaken him, but Thou hast come to him, calling him and drawing him to Thyself by the law and the prophets, and now Thou dost renew him by this heavenly mystery. And Thou hast wrought all this work by Thy wisdom, which is the true Light, by Thy only Son, our Lord and God, Jesus Christ. It is by Him we bring this sacrifice of praise in Thy name, as in the name of

* Μὴ τις κατὰ τινος, μή τις ἐν ὑποκρίσει. "Const. Apost." ii. 57.

Christ and of the Holy Ghost. We bring to Thee, O Lord, not a sacrifice of blood,* but this reasonable sacrifice, which all the nations offer to Thee, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, for great is Thy name. In all places and among all people they present to Thee incense, sacrifice, and offering."

This eucharistic character of the Christian sacrifice, which excludes all idea of expiation, since it is stated in the thanksgiving prayer to be nothing else than the living and spiritual sacrifice of the redeemed Church, is marked still more emphatically in the following words: "O Lord, we render thanks to Thee by Thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent in the last times to be our Saviour and Redeemer, the angel of Thy counsel. It is by Him, the Word who comes forth from Thee, that Thou hast done all. Thou didst send Him from heaven into the womb of a virgin. He was made flesh and born of the virgin. He was manifested to be Thy Son by the Holy Ghost, that He might fulfil all Thy will, and by stretching out His hands on the cross, might bring a new people unto Thee. He suffered to deliver the sufferers who believe in Him. By Thy will He endured His Passion, that He might overcome death, break the bonds of Satan, trample him under His feet, raise the saints, and show forth the resurrection life."†

After this prayer the bread and wine of the communion are taken from the table of offerings and placed upon the eucharistic table. At this moment the Chris-

* *Προσφέρομεν τὴν λογικὴν καὶ ἀναίμακτον λατρείαν ταύτην.* Bunsen, "Antenicæna," iii. 109.

† "Gratias agimus tibi, Domine, per dilectum filium tuum Jesum Christum quem in ultimis diebus misisti." Ibid. 108.

tian heart overflows with thanksgivings. It appears that the supplicatory prayer, which we have placed at the close of the first service, was repeated at this point by the Church in the time of Origen. This, at least, is what we infer from the Greek liturgy of Mark, as it is called, which is subsequent to the Ethiopian liturgy. If this was the case, the supplicatory prayer previous to the Eucharist was probably much abridged, the expanded form being reserved for the eucharistic prayer offered by a deacon standing before the communion table. Some of the expressions thus given to the desires of the Christian heart are full of a sublime and tender poetry. Never was trust in the immense goodness of God expressed more touchingly than in this fragment. "Beside Thee we know none. Thou art our God, the Hope of the desolate, the Helper of the forsaken, the Lifter-up of the fallen, the Port of the shipwrecked. Thou art the Physician of souls and of bodies."*

The benefits of Providence in sustaining the physical life are enumerated and described in words which carry us away to the banks of the Nile, as in the following passage:—"Send the fertilising rains upon the thirsty lands; renew the face of the earth, that it may flourish again under the copious showers. Let the waters of the river rise so high, that our fields may be refreshed and made fruitful. Bless, O God, and crown the year with the treasures of Thy bounty for the poor, the widows, the orphans, and strangers; for the eyes of all wait upon Thee."

These petitions may probably not always have formed a part of the eucharistic prayer, and they appear to

* Bunsen, "Antenicæna," iii. 109.

belong more properly to the former part of the service; but it is otherwise with the prayers which follow, and which are commemorative of the Christians who had gone before their brethren into heaven.

"May the souls of those who have fallen asleep in the faith of Christ rest in Thee. Remember Thou our fathers, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs—every soul which has believed in Christ. We remember them thus to-day that thou mayest give them rest in Thy heavenly kingdom.* Give us to have our part and our heritage with all Thy saints."

The prayer for the Christians who had brought their offerings to the bishop is appropriate at the moment when the bread and wine had just been laid on the table of offerings. It runs thus:—

"Receive, O God, in Thy holy heaven and upon the spiritual altar of Thy high sanctuary, by the hand of Thine archangel, the sacrifices of thanksgiving of those who desire to present them to Thee, without regarding the measure of their offerings, whether they be small or great, public or private, or even if Thy servants have nothing to bring Thee but their desire. Receive our sacrifices to-day as Thou didst accept that of Abel and those of Abraham and of Zacharias, as Thou didst receive the alms of the centurion Cornelius and the two mites of the widow; and give to Thy servants heavenly gifts in exchange for these which are earthly."

The prayer concludes with a comprehensive doxology, inviting the whole creation to praise God. The bishop says:—

"Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory by the

* Τὰς ψυχὰς ἀναπαύσον. Bunsen, "Antenicæna," p. 113.

manifestation of Jesus Christ, our Lord, our God, our Saviour. Purify, O God, the sacrifice of our worship by the illumination of Thy Spirit."

Still standing before the table, the bishop repeats the words of the institution :—

"When He had taken the bread, Jesus Christ gave thanks and said: 'Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you.' In the same manner He took the cup, saying: "This is my blood which is shed for you. This do in remembrance of me.'"

The consecration prayer is then pronounced.

"*The Bishop.*—O King of heaven, Almighty God, remembering the death and resurrection of Thy Son Jesus Christ, we present to Thee this bread and this wine, which are Thine, and which we owe to Thy bounty. We ask Thee, O God of goodness, who lovest man, pour out Thy Holy Spirit upon us, upon this bread and this cup, the offering of Thy Church. Give holiness to all who partake of it, that they may be filled with Thy Holy Spirit in confirmation of their faith. May they praise and magnify Thee in Thy Son Jesus Christ, by whom be honour and glory to Thee in Thy holy Church, world without end. Amen.

"*The People.*—As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be, world without end."

An earnest prayer follows, that the communicants may worthily partake of the sacrament with purified hearts. This is often concluded by the repetition of the Lord's Prayer by the people.

"Lord Lord," exclaims the bishop, taking up the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for in Thy bound-

less compassion Thou knowest that our great weakness renders victory impossible to us. With the temptation, give Thou the way of escape and the victory. O God Almighty, while we receive this holy mystery, give us strength that we may not sin; bless us all in Jesus Christ, to whom, with Thyself and the Holy Spirit, be power and glory for ever and ever.*

"*The Deacon.*—Ye who stand, bow your heads. O eternal Lord, who knowest all secret things, Thy people have bowed the head before Thee, and they have broken the hardness of their heart and of their flesh.† Look down from heaven and bless these our brethren and sisters. Incline Thine ear unto them and hear their prayer. Strengthen them by the might of Thy right hand, and keep them from all evil. Guard Thou their soul and body. Increase their faith and our faith and fear, in the name of Thy only Son, to whom, as to Thee and to the Holy Spirit, be glory and power, world without end. Amen."

A people thus prostrate before God, presenting itself to Him in the full surrender of soul and spirit—this is the great and living sacrifice of the Church. It is a

* We have combined in this passage the two versions of the liturgy of Mark. Bunsen, "Antenicæna," iii. pp. 116, 117. In both we find the same juxtaposition of the spiritualist and sacramentarian point of view, and it seems impossible to distinguish clearly what are interpolations. In the Greek version, the elements of the Eucharist form part of the offering of corn and wine: Τὰ σὰ ἐκ τῶν σῶν δώρων προτεθήκαμεν ἐνώπιόν σου. Nothing can be more correct than this expression, which however is soon overladen with glosses, implying a sort of magical transformation of the consecrated bread and wine, but without saying anything definite. The Greek document is also superior to the Ethiopian, in that it represents the assembly as asking the Holy Spirit first for those who are to partake, before invoking it on the elements themselves: Ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρτους τούτους καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ποτήρια ταῦτα.

† "Declinaverunt tibi capita sua populus tuus et tibi subjecerunt duritiem cordis et carnis." Bunsen, "Antenicæna," p. 120.

moment of the deepest solemnity, and the surrender thus made has now only to be sealed by the actual partaking of the sacrament. The voice of the bishop breaks the silence.

"Holy things to the holy.

"*The People.*—One holy God the Father,
One holy God the Son,
One holy God the Spirit."

Mere words cannot suffice to express the exalted feeling of the Church at the moment of receiving the pledges of redeeming love. It breaks forth into one of the psalms of praise, Psalm xxxiv. Sometimes the Church also repeats that sublime psalm which expresses for all time the most ardent aspirations of the soul after God: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks."

While the inspired hymn is still reverberating, the eucharistic bread is broken and the cup is passed from hand to hand. Then the closing prayer ascends.

"O Lord God, the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we give Thee thanks that we have been made partakers of Thy holy mystery. Grant that it may not be to our condemnation, but to the renewing of our body, soul, and spirit, by Jesus Christ."*

The service closes with this benediction:—

"*The Bishop.*—The Lord be with you all. O eternal God, who reignest over all, Father of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, protect and help these Thy servants. May Thy holy angels be their guard. Stablish them in Thy fear by Thine excellent majesty. Purify their minds that they may think Thy thoughts; give them to believe Thy truth, to desire Thy will; grant them Thy peace and pardon by Thy Son.

* Εὐχαριστοῦμεν σοι. Bunsen, "Antenicæna," p. 25.

"The Lord be with you.

"*The People.*—And with Thy spirit.

"*The Bishop.*—Go in peace."

Such was the celebration of Christian worship in the third century. Dangerous innovations had crept into it, but it still retained much of its simple grandeur and a fervour of prayer and praise, which made it a true act of adoration, a real and spiritual sacrifice offered by the Church to God. There was scarcely any attempt at art, though there was true poetry in the fervent utterances of these devout hearts. The free spirit of God still breathed through their simple forms, bowing the penitent soul in the dust, and then lifting it up with the joy of pardon and the strength of gratitude. There is as yet no altar in the churches, but there is an altar in every heart; and nowhere does more sweet incense arise from that altar than in the pretorium and the arena, where the blood of the martyrs is shed.

We have reproduced at some length the rather monotonous prayers of the Church, because through them we understand what was the atmosphere of devotion in which the early Christians lived and moved — that atmosphere which preserved them from the defilements of the heathen world, and rendered them capable of the highest virtues and most heroic sufferings. In this way we learn also how Christ was regarded by the early Church. He was at once the creating Word and the pitying Saviour; the Son of God, and the brother and friend of man. No language could be too ardent to express the tender veneration in which He was held. Hence Unitarianism, in its very first manifestations, appeared as a heresy of the heart as well as of the mind. Faith

in the Christ-God was written in the depths of the Christian soul; every prayer breathed this faith, which was indeed its very life. Never to the Church of these early ages would the Master have said as to the Pharisee of Nain, "I came into thy house; thou gavest me no kiss." The sinful woman who washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, was not more full of love than the martyr Church. What in truth is the Church but a pardoned sinner, worshipping her Redeemer?

The worship of which we have been speaking was the ordinary worship, whether celebrated every day, as in Egypt, or on the Lord's day alone. We have also described the special observances connected with the ceremony of baptism, and the Easter festival. The most touching of the ceremonies of the early Church was undoubtedly the burial of the martyrs in the crypt of the catacombs, by the dim light of torches, and to the music of hymns of faith and hope. But as Christianity is a religion which extends its influence over the whole life, it was important for us to form an exact and just idea not only of such special ceremonials, but of the habitual worship of the Church. It was by means of this united worship that the Christian life was constantly renewed, and that a spirit of devotion became its habitual characteristic. This harmony between public worship and the service of God in the daily life is the peculiar characteristic of a sincere and unpharisaical religion. This will be abundantly evident in the picture we have yet to give of the moral life of the Christians in the midst of paganism.

BOOK THIRD.

THE MORAL LIFE OF THE CHRISTIANS OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH CENTURIES.

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CHAPTER I.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE MORAL REFORMS WROUGHT BY THE CHURCH COMPARED WITH THE ATTEMPTS AT SOCIAL RENOVATION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

§ 1.—*Principle of the Social Reforms of the Church.*

We have been tracing the development of Christianity within the Church, its organisation and discipline, and the institution of a worship in harmony with its principles. As the fundamental doctrine of this religion of human redemption was the reconciliation of man to God, it abolished all that had been separative in the earlier dispensation. In the sphere of Church government it created a religious equality, every Christian being a priest and king, with free access to God. In the sphere of worship, every home was made a sanctuary, every day a holy day, the entire life a spiritual sacrifice. Not only is every redeemed man called to the service of God, to the abrogation of any priestly caste, but his whole existence is to be consecrated and permeated by the same principle. The whole moral life is embraced by this

new law. Let it once be recognised that every day and every hour of the day belongs to the service of God, and it follows that every form of human activity must be made subservient to this one great aim of life.

Holding these principles, Christianity necessarily repudiated that pagan dualism which, identifying matter with evil, either led to absolute asceticism in the attempt to destroy the evil element it despaired of subduing, or gave the rein to evil as to a wild force not capable of being brought under the yoke of morality. The new religion, on the contrary, freely recognises all the great elements of social life—the family, the service of the state, productive labour, art—but makes them all subserve its great end—the glory of God, and infuses into them all its distinctive spirit—holiness. It is destined thus to become in time a most important social reformer, though its reforms may for a long period not be felt beyond the inner circle of the home. Thus will be gradually formed a force of opinion which will eventually become paramount and change the whole face of society.

We must be prepared, however, to find that in this sphere, as in that of worship and of ecclesiastical government, the Church will soon sink below its first high ideal. Failing to renovate completely the natural life, it will easily be led again to seek perfection after the manner of the Brahmin, and thus in a measure to revive the old dualism. Asceticism, so far from being a higher form of Christianity, is in its essence a confession of defeat, an abdication of the just claim to govern and transform the whole life; and the growth of asceticism gives the measure of this failure. But the defeat is at the most but partial, and before it is accepted

Christianity has had time to make a deep and lasting impression upon family and social life. Before the idea shall have arisen of setting up a standard of Christian perfection attainable only by the elect few, while the masses, to whom its realisation is impossible, shall be consigned to a state of semi-holiness, Christianity will have sown in the hearts and homes of its disciples that seed of which modern society, in spite of all its blemishes, is the noble offspring.

The new religion was very far from declaring war against the Roman Empire and its civil institutions; it indeed felt itself to be the sustaining power of that Empire, as of all human society, which, but for it, would soon have been disintegrated. One of its early apologists, who breathed its purest spirit, likened it to the soul in the body, which, though an invisible presence, unites all the parts and makes it a living whole. So Christianity is the sustaining force in the world, as restoring those principles of morality which are the true life of all human society.* Such teaching is altogether alien to the mystical asceticism which flees with heaven-directed eyes to the desert, whence it expects to see the avenging fire come down to consume a doomed world.

If we try to determine the chief characteristic of the great reforms effected by the early Church in the humble sphere of private life, we discover that they all tend to revive the true idea of humanity, to destroy the barriers by which men are divided, and to restore the unity of mankind, which paganism always ignores. Every institution (political or domestic) of the ancient world was based upon inequality. Man was never regarded simply

* "Epistle to Diognetus," c. 6.

as man, but always according to his nationality, rank, condition, sex, age — all of which formed so many grounds of distinction in the eye of the civil law, to which there could therefore be no appeal for even-handed justice. It could not be otherwise so long as the pagan idea prevailed, for the true human idea is only revealed in the light of the Divine. There must be faith in one common Father of all, before the natural or artificial differences among men will sink to their true proportions.

Judaism, which was founded entirely upon the doctrine of the unity of God, had laid down a much broader basis than paganism for the family life, but it maintained sharply the distinction between nations, as it was indeed constrained to do by its fundamental law, forbidding all contact with strange peoples. Israel alone was the holy and elect race, yet even Israel was destined subsequently to open its ranks to the Gentiles, for the idea of the reconciliation of the great human family was discernible above its stern exclusiveness as its grand final development. It shone like a distant star on the prophetic horizon, but too remote to have any appreciable effect on existing institutions. Christianity, while accepting the religious idea of Mosaism, gave it singular extension. The gospel was monotheism, softened and shorn of its lightnings; the religion of Calvary, unlike that of Sinai, holds out fatherly arms of love to all who seek pardon and reconciliation in their embrace. Christianity alone therefore could use in their full significance those words which are at the root of all moral and social reforms: "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free." The immediate application of

such a principle to the family is the inauguration of a new era, and, by introducing a change in social customs, paves the way for a change in the law. Justin Martyr says: "We who refused to receive strangers into our houses because of the difference of manners, now since we have known Christ make no difficulty of living with any man."*

The God of the gospel is not only Supreme Love; He is also spotless purity, perfect holiness: and this holiness had been manifested in the person of Christ in a human form, full of simplicity and gentleness. This life was to be reflected in that of His disciples, and to make itself felt in every relation. Thus the Christian family is not merely enlarged and delivered from the harsh exclusiveness of paganism, but is also saved from the corruption which destroyed all the bonds of family affection. These bonds were regarded by the pagans as at once oppressive and degrading. This second reform effected by Christianity is closely connected with the first; the same principle which vindicates the unity and equality of men secures purity also. Regarding every man as one of God's creatures, and one of Christ's redeemed ones, the Christian will recognise every man as a brother and an equal, and will not dare therefore to make any the mere plaything of his own pleasure, or to defile in him the image of the Creator. He knows also that he is bound to reflect that image with ever-growing clearness and purity in his own soul and life. He believes in a God whose goodness is not weakness, and who, in the bold and poetical language of Scripture,

* Πρὸς τοὺς οὐχ ὁμοφύλους διὰ τὰ ἔθη ἑστίας κοινὰς μὴ ποιούμενοι νῦν μετὰ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁμοδίαιτοι γινόμενοι. Justin, "Apol." ii. p. 61. Cologne Edition, 1636.

is a consuming fire for all that is evil. Thus, the new religion, so far from deserting the world, as has been unjustly said, or rejecting any of the various elements of ordinary life, strives to purify and exalt them. It disengages the true idea of humanity from the limitations and alloy by which it had been fettered and obscured, and brings it out into liberty and purity. Humanity finds that it really gains by that which seems its loss of freedom; for the immunities which paganism granted in the spheres of public and private life and of art, were but as the canker and the worm eating away its very life. In renouncing this false freedom it enters on a new and nobler career; the ideal of the family, of the state, of art, all come forth purified and ennobled from the fiery crucible. The flame of sacrifice consumes only the dross, and purifies all the gold that is cast into it.

It will be our task to trace this social regeneration wrought by Christianity in the various spheres in which it was silently carried on; while we note at the same time the partial falling away from its true principles, which ended in the ascetic life and teaching of some of its noblest and most devoted sons.

It is impossible to form a just idea of the moral progress effected by Christianity in the second and third centuries, without first attempting to realise what was the condition of the Greco-Roman society in the midst of which it was placed.

We shall not attempt to repeat the picture already given in our introductory chapters, of the period known sometimes as the Decline, sometimes as the Peace, of the Empire, according to the more severe or more

lenient judgment of the historian. We shall confine ourselves to a few important points, only touching on the intellectual movement of which we have already spoken, in so far as it bears on social life. No period of history has given rise to so many contradictions, now extolled and now decried in unqualified terms by the apologist and controversialist, as the one sought to exalt Christianity and the other to detract from it, by exaggerating either the good or the bad elements in the state of society in the midst of which it appeared. It is needful for us to set aside every such prejudice and preconceived idea, and to recognise in this memorable era the most remarkable admixture ever seen of good and evil. Nothing in history is so vile as the depths of this old world; nothing can be purer, more noble, than its lofty heights. But we want to know if these are isolated heights, or if from them there flow healing streams into the plain below; if the pure air breathed at that altitude is capable of reaching and reanimating the depressed strata of society beneath; if the crowned sages who reflect deathless renown on the human intellect can do more than cast a ray of far-off lustre on the future of a world which they have no power to regenerate. We want to know how the reform of Christianity was accomplished in a world of such conflicting elements, where the wrecks of obsolete customs and ancient systems form a restless chaos, out of which a new creation can only be evolved by the inbreathing of a new and mighty spirit.

§ 2.—*Pagan Family Life.**

A certain amelioration of manners is to be traced as coincident with the expansion of thought in the early days of the Empire. But the fundamental principle of ancient Roman society remained, and, though for a time modified, might reassert itself at any moment in all its rude severity. The separatism which sacrificed the idea of humanity to secondary and artificial differences, did not yield to the aspirations of the lofty spirits who were above and in advance of their age; it still held sway in the family and in the forum, though tempered more than of old by considerations of equity and benevolence. The ancient beliefs on which it rested had grown dim and dull, but no faith powerful enough to write a new law upon the conscience and to transform the institutions of society had come to take their place.

* In reference to the efforts after social reform in the Roman Empire, we take as our authorities the writers of the times, especially the comic poets and authors of letters and romances. Of modern works we quote from the following :—

1. Foremost and of primary importance, the inscriptions of Orelli completed by Henzen. "Inscriptionum latinarum selectarum amplissima collectio ad illustrandam Romanæ antiquitatis disciplinam accommodata. Orellius. Henzen, Turin, 1828–1856.

2. Darstellunsen aus Sittenaeschichte Roms. Two vols. By L. Friedländer.

3. "Handbuch der Rœmischen Alterthümer," begonnen von W. A. Becker fortgesezt von Joachim Marquardt, fünfter theil. Rœmische Privatalterthümer, Leipzig, 1564.

4. "La Religion romaine d'Auguste aux Antonins." By Auguste Bossier. Two vols. Paris, Hachette, 1874.

5 "Histoire des Romains depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à la fin du règne des Antonins." By Victor Duruy. Vol. v. Hachette, 1876.

6. "Essai historique sur la société civile dans le monde romain et sur sa transformation par le Christianisme." A work by Charles Schmidt, Professor of the Faculty of Strasbourg, which was crowned by the French Academy.

7. "Les apôtres ;" "Saint Paul ;" "L'Antechrist." By Ernest Renan.

We must be under no mistake: radical changes in legislation, though they may be embodied in the cold and abstract formulas of jurisprudence, have always originated in the warm and living impulses of a nation's heart, and these are stirred by nothing less than a moral revolution. This was the great need of the Roman world at the commencement of our era. The gross imperfections of its legislature were largely due to the decadence of the religious faith which used to be its mainspring. As no new faith had taken the place of the old, it was only a scornful or licentious scepticism which removed without destroying the ancient barriers between class and class, and unhappily abolished moral no less than social restraints. The family relation was at once enlarged and perverted under the Empire, and it lost in purity far more than it gained in freedom. It ran the risk of perishing from the loss of all religious faith, without being really enfranchised from the old bondage of class to class. The broader ideas of humanity which began to circulate in the midst of this increasing degradation of manners, were like the mirage rising from the marsh—a false and fugitive light, tending only to mislead.

It is as true of society as of the individual man, that life is not sustained by bread alone; it needs the moral and religious element which alone gives it consistency, making law triumph over force, a certain fixed order over the license of conflicting passion and self-interest. Law can only exist where moral obligation is recognised, and moral obligation in a nation is always based upon religious faith. As Sophocles has nobly said, there is a god in every law. The city of ancient times owed all

its strength and all its weakness to the idea of a god upon which it was based. It was this idea which gave it cohesion and durability. The religious belief which in Greece and Rome governed the formation and preservation of the city was singularly powerful.* It first reigned in the family, of which the fatherland was but the natural extension. Now, in the family—strange as it is must we not admit it?—the most powerful influence is the memory of those who are no more. It seems as though the immortal spirit would assert its majesty through the pale, death-stricken face; the dead are not lost; and over the open grave where a father is laid, many a child has caught its first glimpse of a higher world unknown. The spirit of the dead hovers around, men feel the divinity in it, and to worship the Manes, after the ashes had been placed under the family hearthstone (which henceforward became a sacred place), was a natural instinct of the heart. This domestic worship of the Manes and Penates is the primitive worship of the family. Around the hearth, which was at once tomb and altar, the family gathered; every meal commenced with a libation to the Manes. In their presence every defilement must be cleansed, and no sacrifice neglected which could bring them honour. There must assuredly have been a great moral power in that deep feeling of mingled tenderness and terror, which placed the whole life of the family under the protection of a departed and deified ancestry; but to the same feeling the family in these times owed its stern exclusiveness. Nothing could be more inhospitable than a hearth which belonged only to the direct male

* "La Cité antique." By Fustel de Coulanges. Paris, Hachette.

descendants of the house. The supreme object of veneration in such a home is the progenitor, who is supposed to protect and preserve the life which has sprung from him, and who has bequeathed the *lampade vita* to his heir. He alone is the priest of the house, and none but his direct descendants can share in the sacrifice. A stranger would profane the sacred act, and his presence would be enough to trouble the Manes; thus the ancestral tomb is carefully concealed beneath a stone known only to the family. The worship of the dead is essentially a family rite, as is indicated by the expressive term *parentare.** The dead who has left no son receives no offerings, says Lucian.† Thus the family lives in a world of its own, and even within this little world the same principle of separation prevails. The woman only takes part in the domestic worship through the man; it is through her father while she lives in his house, and afterwards through her husband, that she is associated in the family rites—hence her perpetual minority and civil incapacity. The child stands to the father in the same relation of dependence; he is only regarded as one of the family when he has been recognised and accepted by him, and he remains under the absolute authority of the representative of the *lars familiaris*. Originally, the slaves had no right in the sacrifice; they were the excommunicated ones of the house, and might be used for any vile purpose. The rights of the family absolutely exclude the broader rights of humanity; the two are in direct contradiction, so jealous is the tutelary deity of the hearth. When

* Cicero, "De legibus," ii. 26. Fustel de Coulanges, "Cité antique," p. 33.

† Lucian, "De luctu."

the family gradually grew by alliance with other families and became a tribe, and the union of tribes formed the city, this was but an extended family connection, within which the more private rites could still be observed.

The divinities of the household subsequently found their place in that naturalistic polytheism which grew out of the awe felt by the soul of man in presence of the grand aspects of nature, and especially in view of the manifestation of its twofold forces of production and of destruction. These were personified under the influence of that feeling after a God which is inherent in the soul, and which is more ready to expend itself upon created objects than to rise to its source and apprehend it in its purity. The gods created by the Greek or Roman mind occupied the same place in relation to the city as did the Manes of the departed to the family. They were the Penates of the fatherland, which also had its sacred hearth. At Rome this was placed in the temple of Vesta, where a fire was to be kept perpetually burning. The same exclusiveness which had characterised the home ruled also in the city; no stranger or slave was recognised; the intermediate population between the slaves and the families who had a right to this sacrifice, were regarded as profane; they were attached to the fatherland rather by a bond of serfdom than by any moral tie. Hence the strong line of demarcation between the plebeian and the patrician or *patres*, that is to say, inheritors of their ancestry. Hence the domestic law which gave to the father absolute authority over wife and child, whom he might judge, condemn, and even put to death within the home, as sole king and priest over his own family. Hence the severity of the laws of inheritance, as regards

the woman, who could not inherit in person, because, as worship descended only in the male line, the inheritance which perpetuates the sacred proprietorship must follow the same course. Only the son may sacrifice after his father; hence he is *sole heir*, and should his line fail, the property goes to a collateral male branch of the family. Natural sonship gives no right if it does not coincide with legal sonship, that is, with that which is recognised by the father as perpetuating the ancestral line. Thus the former relation may always be set aside by the latter, which is often created by adoption. The right of bequest does not exist in this ancient constitution of the family; the man is not master either of his wealth or of himself; he belongs entirely to his house, that is to say, to his ancestors and his posterity.*

This stern law was, in the course of time, modified by various compromises, especially in Rome, where the plebs became sufficiently powerful to secure to themselves their own worship, and in a great measure their political rights. Nevertheless, the line of demarcation was still broad and clear; the separation continued absolute between free men and slaves, and between the citizens and strangers; that is to say, between Romans and all the rest of the world.

It is certain that so long as the religious faith retained its fervour, it lent a remarkable power to this social status, and exerted a salutary influence upon the morals of the people. Adultery in this rigorous organisation of the Roman family was equivalent to sacrilege, for it was

* Fustel de Coulanges, "Cité antique," p. 80. See also Troplong, "De l'influence du Christianisme sur le droit civil des Romains." Paris, Hachette, 1868. c. 3.

an infraction at once of the civil and religious law. The Roman matron, spinning wool on the hearth, was regarded as the guardian of the sacred fire; her motherhood preserved her chaste dignity. The father was invested with real majesty, though the yoke he laid upon the whole household often appeared very heavy. The conception of deity would have been no doubt greatly lowered by being thus embodied in the household Lares, but for that dim sense of the Divine, which to the idolater is always present as greater than the actual object of his worship. Man found himself in the presence of a mysterious power, whom he dared not offend. He knew that any blood shed, left a stain on his hearth, and cried for expiation. Public life, which was but family life on a larger scale, was in the same way bound up with religion. The city had its own gods—the founders and heroes who had defended and saved it. Though dead, they were still its tutelary spirits. Thus each nation set its own impress on the deities of classic polytheism; and each had its special divinity, which might or might not be adored elsewhere, so comprehensive was this vague mythology.

The altar of the city occupied a central place, but was always hidden from the eyes of strangers. All the great acts of political life had a religious character. The census was the occasion of a national purification; entry on the office of a magistrate was accompanied with sacred rites; the Roman Senate debated in a temple, and every popular assembly was inaugurated by a sacrifice. The army carried with it the hearth on which burned its sacred fire. The general sacrificed before the battle, and the triumph which followed victory

was a great religious ceremony. Thus religion bore pre-eminently that national character which identified it with the entire life of the people, but at the same time made it local and exclusive. Hence its union of strength and narrowness.

This national character impressed on religion was in its effect far more of a peril than of an advantage, for its tendency was to render it more and more an outward and material thing: it was rather a well-advised policy than the worship of a deity. At Rome especially the national religion was simply and solely self-adoration. This was the great idol which received more incense than all the gods of Greece, and homage was paid to these only because they were regarded as the founders of the ancient glory of their country, and because fresh services were expected of them. Besides the gods of the first order, there were a host of local divinities who owed their worship to some service they were supposed to have rendered in times of war or plague. The Italian Olympus was primarily a historical monument: the site of the sacred mountain was not in some distant and mysterious spot; the feet of Roman citizens trod it every day; the Jupiter of the imperial city was enthroned on the Capitol.

These gods many, born in the throes of national calamities, were much more feared than loved. They must on no account be offended: hence the minutest care was taken in observing all prescribed rites. As the gods were not supposed to possess either holiness or goodness, but merely a capricious power of wrath which was to be averted, there was no idea of pleasing them by pure manners and a blameless life, but only of ap-

peasing them by punctual worship: thus there was the most scrupulous observance of sacerdotal traditions both in the sacrifices and the sacred formulas. Religion was merely an elaborate ritual, and had little or no influence on the moral life. It is, moreover, of the essence of such a religion to concern itself only with acts, taking no notice of feelings or motives, and in the acts themselves to pay heed only to those which may have some influence on the constitution or destinies of the city. Such a religion has no scope beyond the terrestrial and the temporal; it makes the soul cleave to the dust instead of giving it wings, and it puts in the place of the conscience, which enjoins obedience to a higher law, an artificial conscience, which takes account only of those actions which may be injurious in their effects on the country. It is the religion and morality of the public welfare, and leaves entirely apart all that relates only to the simple practice of right and to the higher development of the individual.* Thus the morality of Rome was rigidly monogamist; it enjoined chastity on the matron, since without it family interests would be dangerously compromised, as the direct line of descent would no longer be assured; but it attached very little importance to irregularity of conduct on the part of the husband. Cato, the ideal Roman of the republic, shows himself very lenient in this respect, admitting concubinage without scruple. All the advantages of education are to be granted to the son, who is to be his father's legally recognised heir, but there is no protection for the child who is not yet made heir, or who is

* Gaston Boissier, "La Religion Romaine d'Auguste aux Antonins," vol. i. chap. I.

born out of wedlock: he is of no value to the republic, and his position is simply that of a slave. No one would have thought, in the golden age of the republic, of pleading in his favour his simple right as a man. It is obvious that such a religion can have no influence on the home life, and still less upon the inner moral life, though an indestructible basis of morality may be discovered beneath its accumulated rites and ceremonies.

To the same cause we must ascribe the striking contrast in the ancient Roman law between justice and equity. Justice in Rome, like religion, attaches no importance to the intrinsic character of the act, but merely to its social utility: it gives no support to claims founded on nature, but only to those which promote the civic welfare. In the family, ties of blood are ignored; the civil bond is that which alone gives power. As M. Troplong has said: "The family is nothing else than an association of individuals recognising the power of one head, whose despotic authority is expressly sanctioned by the law. Whoever magnifies this authority belongs to the family; whoever lends nothing to it, though he be child or lineal descendant, is cut off from the family."* It is not marriage, however regularly contracted, which gives the woman a place in the house of her husband, but certain purely civil ceremonies appended to it. Even a legitimate son may be cast out of the family and supplanted by an adopted child. In every case, the civil law overrides the law of nature. To the claim of blood Rome was deaf and impassive. The voice of kinship can only make itself heard when it

* Troplong, "De l'influence du Christianisme sur le droit civil des Romains," p. 21.

speaks from beneath the civil mask, says Vico. "According to the law of the Twelve Tables, that which is obligatory on a man is not obedience to conscience, to the law of right and wrong, but a literal compliance with certain legal formalities: *uti lingua nuncupassit, ita jus esto.* Everything that exceeds the appointed formula is practically ignored."

It is plain that if the religion of the family, in becoming the religion of the city, rose one step by putting in the place of the worship of ancestors that of less local divinities, it gained nothing morally in the change, for it became more and more an outward and political thing. All means were regarded as sanctified by the end, that end being the public good; while the higher claims of mercy and justice, in themselves the noblest of all, were sacrificed without scruple. It is not then surprising that the injurious effect of such a religious system should have told upon Roman family life, even before the ancient faith was undermined by a general scepticism yet more fatal in its effects. If we wish to understand what was the private life of Roman citizens two hundred years before Christ, we shall find a graphic picture of it in the dramatic representations of Plautus, painted by the vigorous hand of that bold genius of comedy. Even through the exaggerations always used by comic writers to excite a smile, we feel that we are getting a glimpse of real life. We find ourselves in the ancient Roman household, with its peculiar worship, the centre of all domestic life. Greek mythology has introduced into it some of its corrupting fables, but in contact with the rude Roman mind they have lost their

* Troplong, "De l'influence Christianisme sur le droit civil des Romains," p. 42.

poetic flavour, and are become mere tales, likely to exercise a very pernicious influence. Thus we find a husband forbidding his wife to pay homage to the male gods, because of their impure example. The old worship of the Penates still subsists. There is no hesitation in asking protection of the deity for the commission of wrong.* The law of the family is maintained in all its severity. The father is absolute master in the house, keeping his wife in abject dependence, allowing her no money for her own use,† and armed with such power over his daughters that, in the absence of their husbands,‡ he can compel them to form other marriages, or can oblige his virgin daughter to become a courtesan.§ His control over the young children is not less absolute, and he makes large use of his right of desertion. One of the most telling points in the plays of Plautus is the sudden recognition by the father of a child whom he had formerly repudiated. The son, who is to be subsequently the heir, is kept in a degrading subjection, which prolongs his minority. It was to the representation of slavery, as we shall see presently, that Plautus devoted his most vigorous efforts. We have thus ancient Roman society, with its fundamental institutions, brought vividly before us. Each of these institutions proved vicious, because the moral and religious spirit which at first animated it had become extinct. Undoubtedly conscience now and again lifted up her voice in the midst of this social degradation, as though to assure us that man, however debased, cannot altogether abjure his true nature.

* "Casina," v. 238; "Trinumus," v. 17-20.
† "Casina," v. 97, 98. ‡ This is the whole intrigue of Stichus.
§ "Tua istæc potestas est."
"Persa," v. 341.

Now we hear a young woman pleading with her father, who is about to commit a crime, telling him that if to poverty is added an ill name, the poverty becomes more oppressive, and the shame lives on long after it is thought to be dead.* Again, a faithful wife refuses to break the conjugal tie because her husband is poor. "My beggar," she says, "pleases me as well as a king his queen."† Or again, a wretched slave on the point of being sacrificed for a master whom he loves, says, with Antigone, "He who dies for virtue does not perish.‡ But these are but fugitive gleams, and only enhance the general gloom. Even the sovereignty of the father has no true dignity; his white hairs have been too bedraggled in the mire to form a crown of glory, and his authority is only regarded as a detestable yoke, to be escaped by any artifice. The gravest cause of evil is, that the unfaithfulness of the husband is sanctioned so long as the civil rights of marriage are secured; and the very father of the aggrieved wife will endeavour to bring her back to reason.

The matron takes revenge on her husband either by giving vent to her spleen in insufferable tattle, or by laying some snare for him by which his gross vices will be exposed, or by covering and encouraging the immoralities of her son. The son uses the great weapon by which unprincipled weakness seeks to free itself from a hated yoke: he deceives his father by all means in his power.

* "Nam si ad paupertatem admigrant infamiæ,
Gravior paupertas fit."
"Persa," v. 354–355.

† "Placet ille meus mihi mendicus; suus rex reginæ ¡ lacet."
"Stichus," v. 132.

‡ "Qui per virtutem perbitat, is non interit."
"Captivi," v. 623.

The slave is always his accomplice, and finds his revenge on his master by corrupting the morals of the family. The father, who, like all tyrants, lives an isolated life, has as his habitual guest some parasite, who pays by his gross flatteries for his share in the orgies. "At his table," says one of these degraded creatures, "one defends his hearths and his altars."* Plautus brings before us one of the most fearful consequences of the desertion of children. This barbarous practice gives the fullest encouragement to prostitution, which is carried on with unblushing freedom, and every facility is offered to these unnatural vices, which are accepted as a law of nature.† Thus the family dwelling, with its sacred hearth and the purifying fire which is to be kept ever burning on the altar, is a place without purity or domestic love. Face to face with it the lupanar keeps open door as a sort of recognised institution for men of every age, even though those who pass its portals do so to their own irrecoverable damage and loss.‡

Half a century later, we should say, judging from the dramatic representations of Terence, that manners were softened, and that benevolence had asserted its sway; prospects unknown in the past open before the eye; there is more breadth and freedom of spirit; the voice of humanity is heard in the sublime words which did not signify at first all that they have since been seen to mean:—

Homo sum et nil humani a me alienum puto.

As we read Terence, we are fain to believe that the head

* "Nam ibi de divinis atque humanis cernitur." "Trinumus," v. 436.

† "Mercator," v. 41. ‡ "Truculentus," v. 322.

of the family makes a less despotic use of his authority, and yields to some natural emotions of fatherly tenderness. The son in return, in the midst of his youthful follies, shows some gleams of true filial affection. Natural feeling is expressed with that delicacy of language, naïveté, and quick sensibility which form the charm of the comedies of Terence. Greek influence has fostered, even among the rude Romans, that graceful poetry impregnated with Attic salt, which has given an air of elegance and originality even to the merely imitative. Yet Roman society remains essentially the same; the father still has the right to abandon his child at will; the slave may be crucified at the caprice of the master; the mother occupies an inferior position in the house, and never obtains the respect she deserves, however noble may be her character and conduct. The son resorts to a thousand artifices to procure money and indulge his youthful follies. The procurer, the courtesan, the treacherous slave, are all prominent and important personages. Vice seems a matter of course, and is the basis of every intrigue. The poetry of Terence, unlike most of the compositions of the ancient theatre, is much more beautiful than the face it covers, but still a transparent mask, through which pagan society is seen in all its vileness. We fully admit that there are exceptions to the general impurity, and that there are some noble characters, some well-assorted marriages which spread around them an atmosphere of virtue; but Terence gives us the average morality of his time, and in the pieces which derided Scipio we have an animated and faithful picture of the manners of the age.

The influence of Greece somewhat modified and softened the ancient constitution of Roman society, both in private and public life; but the change was not radical. It was two centuries later that the decisive transformation was wrought which inaugurated the rule of imperial Rome. At this important crisis we note the development of the two influences which have done most to enlarge the mind, to demand consideration for man simply as man, and to anticipate, if not to establish, the broad claims of humanity, as above the merely prescriptive rights of a hard and narrow jurisprudence.

Roman conquests and stoicism combined to produce this result, though it was as yet but very partially and imperfectly realised. Stoicism can hardly be spoken of as yet, on the eve of the Empire; the philosophy of Cicero is akin to the new Academy, and borrows thence its generous intuitions touching the commonwealth of man. From this period this great cause of the expansion of ideas displays all its power, and only gains strength by the conquests of the Empire. The dominion of Rome extends east and west, over peoples of every tongue and of every grade of civilisation. The ancient city becomes too strait to serve as the focus of so vast an empire. The right of citizens, granted first to the Italians, is finally extended to the provinces, by the famous edict of Caracalla. A concession so alien to the original constitution of Rome clearly indicates a revolution in thought as well as in act. But it would be an error to suppose that it went far enough to establish the right of man as man, apart from any civic relation. The city had indeed become a vast aggregate, but all beyond it—the savage and indomit-

able Germans, the Parthians, and in short all nations not appertaining to Rome—were still regarded simply as barbarians, and the circus yet reeked with the blood of the captives who were brought back from the wars constantly carried on for the protection of the frontiers of the empire. The stranger comes from a greater distance than before, but he is still excluded from all common rights, and has no more protection than the slave against the abuse of power.

It must not be forgotten, moreover, that the privileges of the city were thus extended just at the time when they had become of least value. Civil wars had developed the spirit of vengeance and contempt of human life; torrents of blood had been shed without scruple. We know how recklessly the imperial government trampled under foot all rights and liberties, reducing the senate to a state of shameful degradation, withdrawing from the people the right of suffrage, and confounding all ranks in a common servitude. In losing his political rights the citizen ceases to be truly a man. Abandoned to the caprice of his superior, exalted to-day, degraded to-morrow, he has neither dignity nor security: all are equal, but it is the equality of the slave. Scepticism is at the same time spreading on every hand; faith in the gods is all but extinct. Impatient to get his share of so much accumulated wealth, and always uncertain of the morrow under a despotism which made all life precarious, the Roman citizen ran headlong into debauch. How was it possible that under such conditions the conquest of the world should have restored the true idea of humanity?

That idea shone out brilliantly in the noble philosophy

which was the most original creation of the Roman mind, in that lofty Stoicism of which Seneca was the eloquent apostle. We have already shown how important an influence was exercised by this school on the moral progress of the empire. We need not now fully enter into its teaching, which was rather a rule of conduct than a philosophy. It gave to the idea of the unity of mankind such expression as it had never before found in the ancient world. Nothing can be more emphatic on this point that the saying of Seneca, *Homo res sacra homini**—"Let man be sacred to his fellow man." He followed out this noble principle to its fullest consequences when he said again, "We recognise the whole world as our fatherland."† He pleaded the cause of the weak and oppressed, and demanded that the slave should be treated not as a beast of burden, but, to use his expression, as an inferior friend. We do not think that he must of necessity have learned these maxims of benevolence in the school of St. Paul, and we reject the legend of his pretended correspondence with the Apostle of the Gentiles.‡ It can never be positively denied, however, by a sound criticism, that the new religion may have exerted at least an indirect influence over the great minds of the time. Christianity in the first century of our era had widely extended its missions; it had already diffused through the general atmosphere a purer breath of humanity. It will never be possible to determine how far Stoicism was affected by it. We have no wish to detract anything from its glory; it unquestion-

* "Ep." 19. † "De tranquillitate animi." 3.

‡ See Aubertin. "Senèque et Saint Paul, étude sur les rapports supposés entre la philosophie et l'apôtre" (1869).

ably strengthened the bonds of kindness and brotherly feeling which were presently, under a yet mightier influence, to transform completely the stern legislation of the ancient city. It contributed in more than one respect to make that legislation more equitable, and to exalt the true law of nature above that which was merely artificial and exclusive. Nevertheless, it is admitted by even its warmest admirers, that it failed to produce a complete change in the customs of society; it fostered all generous aspirations, but it had not power to realise them; it showed the high standard to be attained, but it left it a still remote ideal. Its powerlessness to renovate society is explained by many causes. First, stoicism had made a miscalculation when it judged that practical morality would gain by all that was removed from the region of metaphysics; and it deprived itself of the most powerful lever to raise the human soul, when it asserted its independence of the religious conscience or of philosophic thought. Its precepts failed for want of this support; they could not counterbalance the opposite maxims, which were interwoven with a whole system of religious beliefs; these must be overthrown, and a substitute found for them, if the old inequalities among men were practically to cease. Not only had Stoicism nothing to offer which could take the place of the popular religion, but, after elaborating a paradoxical doctrine which cast a veil of monotheism over the ancient pantheistic naturalism, and while promising liberty to the wise, led as its necessary issue to fatalism, it finally accepted polytheism with all its gross fables. It retained indeed its peculiar tenets, but as these were reserved for its adepts, they

exercised no influence upon the masses, who still adhered to the old superstitions, and knew nothing of this humanitarianism of the initiate. A moral theory which is not associated with any religious sentiment always lacks force and fire, and fails to produce any real change in the condition of society. Stoicism had its preachers and directors of conscience, but its influence, though beneficial, never extended beyond a very narrow circle. "With its deserted heaven," says M. Duruy, "which could not be supposed to beam kindly upon Christianity, with its bare doctrine of duty, without any other recompense than that of a satisfied conscience, with its haughty attitude towards the gods from whom it asked nothing, and its future of annihilation to which it looked forward without trembling, Stoicism was adapted only to a few select souls, never to the body of the people. This morality without religion, this philosophy without metaphysics, this rationalism without any element of the marvellous, could never gain any grasp of the common mind, and failed to satisfy those who were aspiring after a higher ideal."*

The Stoics were fully conscious of this lack of power; hence Seneca said, that if the state was too corrupt to be cured, the wise man should not expend his strength in unavailing efforts.† The stoical doctrine of the insensibility of the sage was ill adapted to re-adjust the relations between men. It implied that all that was beyond his reason was foreign to him, though it were his own wife and children, as said Epictetus. Thus the Stoic isolated himself on the frozen summit

* Duruy, "Histoire des Romains," v. 431. † Seneca, "De otio," 32.

of his pride. All its eloquent admonitions to compassion were singularly weakened by this theory of complete indifference. Seneca had even gone so far as to charge his disciples not to allow themselves to be troubled by the tears of others.* Pity and ready charity were only secondary virtues; impassibility, making the sage greater than Jupiter himself, was the crowning glory of man. † That which was peculiarly lacking to the stoical philosophy was the power to triumph over evil. Where could it find strength for such a conflict, driving man, as it did, back upon himself, and opening no avenue through which higher help could reach him? Admire only thyself; ‡ this was its motto. Thus it left man to his own impotence. Its most illustrious adepts furnished the proof of this in themselves, for they were constrained to admit that they fell far short of their ideal, and thus provoked the ironical comment of those who watched their lives.—*Aliter loqueris, aliter vivis.*§ We know how many allowances Seneca made for the moral miseries of his time. Serenus, his most distinguished disciple, the melancholy devotee of the ideal, died, like Claudius, of an attack of indigestion from a surfeit of mushrooms.

The noblest adherents of this school were also those who felt the deepest despair, and it is to them we owe that apology of suicide, which is the final utterance of the system, and the admission of its inability to renovate society or man.‖

We cannot better conclude our remarks on the teaching of the Stoics, and of Seneca in particular,

* "Non succurit alienis lacrymis." Seneca, "De Clement." 16.
† Ibid. "Const. Sapient." 2. ‡ Ibid. "Vita Beata," 5. § Ibid.
‖ Ibid. "Ep." 70.

than by quoting the judgment pronounced by M. Boissier in his noble book on the religion of the Romans from Augustus to the Antonines.

"Nothing was more remote from the Stoic's idea than the creation of a broad and popular Church, which might gather in and hold the floating mass of mankind in quest of an exact belief. Its hesitating philosophy contains no solution of the great problems which reason proposes; its morality is neither sufficiently strong nor sufficiently assured to form a refuge for the soul amid the storms of life. Its passionate utterances might raise a sort of feverish emotion in those who heard them, but could furnish no sustaining food for the mind. It agitated questions which it could not resolve. Thus the Stoic failed to build up his own school; the minds which he aroused to think, but could not satisfy, sought satisfaction elsewhere, and it was not Stoicism, but another doctrine which reaped the benefit of its sowing."*

There was, however, a period, brief indeed, which united all the conditions necessary to this moral renovation: this was the age of the Antonines, when the two forces, which had been at work most effectually to enlarge the narrow circle of the ancient city, were combined in the person of the rulers. The universal monarchy, which had brought almost all nations under the dominion of Rome, had at its head emperor-philosophers. Before their day, one great prince had endeavoured to reform Roman society. Augustus, as soon as he found himself in possession of undisputed

* "La Religion Romaine depuis Auguste jusqu'aux Antonins." Vol. ii. p. 504.

power, used it with wise moderation for the purpose of giving again a soul to that great soulless body of the empire of which he was the head, and for infusing into it afresh those religious beliefs without which no State is able to sustain itself. He devoted the utmost care to the restoration of the old forms of worship. Chosen sovereign pontiff by the votes of the *comitia*, he made the altar the prop of his throne, and encouraged religion by every measure adapted to show that he was pleased with its somewhat ostentatious observance. He even created new forms of worship, some of which were in his own honour, and had their privileged college of priests. Never had the religious solemnities been observed with more enthusiasm. When the great secular jubilee was celebrated, it would have seemed that the universal scepticism of the foregoing age was an obsolete thing, and that henceforth the ridicule of the doubters would be covered by the prayers of a people sincerely devoted to their gods. And yet this restoration of the old rites was purely political, and consequently artificial.* Faith cannot be sustained by decrees, and in all these august ceremonials faith was lacking. Augustus rebuilt the altars, as another despot would subsequently do, on the eve of convulsions yet more terrible than those of the triumvirate. The moral disposition of a people is not to be changed by a *coup d'état*. Thus, under Augustus, all religion, except in the case of some tender and tearful souls like Virgil, was purely perfunctory, a mere semblance of faith, worn as a court uniform. How could it be forgotten that the coryphæus of the secular games was Horace,

* See Boissier, vol. i. c. 3.

the graceful Epicurean, who broke off his songs at Lesbia to celebrate the great gods in whom he did not believe? Augustus sought and aimed at a reformation of manners no less than of ideas: he passed one decree after another for the punishment of adultery, and, by the law *Pappia Poppæa*, he made celibacy a crime, and a fruitful marriage a claim to imperial gifts. Unhappily, his favourite was Mecænas, the man of twenty-seven divorces; he himself had been an adulterer before his marriage, and the veiled litter which was borne into the palace did not escape the eyes of the chaste vestals. His daughter and granddaughter, the two Julias, by the excesses through which they brought dishonour on his hearth, showed the utter futility of such decrees in matters of morality. Augustus might send Ovid to die in Thrace for his part in these scandals, and for having relieved the tedium of his so-called religious works by writing licentious verses; but he could not exorcise the spirit of licence, the demon of unbridled lust, which possessed this ancient world.

The moral and religious reforms of the Antonines were far more important. In the first place, they were undertaken by men who belonged themselves to the moral *élite* of mankind; they were the purest and noblest of all the adherents of the Stoical philosophy. The thoughts of Marcus Aurelius remain to this day the breviary of unaided human virtue.* Moreover, these great princes found a standpoint for their reforms in the reawakening of religious faith, which began under their reign, in great part under the influence of the dif-

* See M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire's beautiful rendering of these thoughts into French, with his introduction and preface.

ferent national religions to which Rome accorded the large hospitality of her Pantheon. The Stoical philosophy, while still carrying on its eclectic proselytism, and that kind of lay pastorate which it so well understood, became more and more closely allied to the popular religion, the symbols of which it interpreted after its own fashion. Marcus Aurelius always harmonised his philosophy with the national religion, observing its rites as a sincere devotee. Under these conflicting influences, the level of morality rose among the higher classes; legislation became more lenient towards the oppressed; women, children, and slaves benefited by this advance, as we shall have occasion to observe when we come to trace the reforms wrought by Christianity in the life of the home. The old law, which recognised only the right of the citizen, who was the sole proprietor, to whom alone the law accorded protection, both in goods and person, and who was constituted absolute master of all his immediate inferiors,—this narrow and implacable law was modified to some extent by the principles of natural right. Strict legality, which recognised only the historical right created by privilege and conquest, was also made to yield slightly to considerations of equity.* Cicero was the first to say that the source and rule of right was to be sought, not in the law of the Twelve Tables, but in human reason; that true faith is the law of equity written in the conscience, an eternal law, from which no senate can set us free. The lawyers of the two following ages, especially in the times of the Antonines, imbibed these noble principles, but without being

* Troplong, work quoted.

ablé always to make them prevail over the old law. In some cases they could only bend and modify, not abrogate, the ancient practice, though they appealed directly to the law of nature in support of the original equality of men. By skilful subterfuges they contrived to create certain rights to property, not merely civil. The right of bequest could follow the dictates of natural affection in the matter of inheritance, by means of the codicil. "The will of the man counterbalanced the will of the civil law."* Beneficence was encouraged; the emperors established foundations for the indigent, and the towns were enabled to act in concert in raising barriers against the scourges by which any one of them might be visited. A broader bond of solidarity linked together the members of this great social body, and the latitude granted to the corporations of workmen, and to the burial clubs, extended the benefit of this solidarity to the lowest grades of society.

Again, it is not possible to determine how much the indirect influence of Christianity, which was a constantly growing power, had to do with these reforms, which it has been necessary for us to look at collectively, in order to see their general bearing. Of the Roman empire at this period, it may be said, as Villemain said of Epictetus: It was not Christian, but it bore the impress of Christianity. Like the ship of Christopher Columbus, to which the wind carried wafts of perfume from the unknown shore on which he was about to land, but which had not yet risen into view, so the thought of man, on the eve of touching on a new world, feels passing over it a new and divine

* Troplong, work quoted.

breath, by which it knows that that world is not far away.

Without detracting at all from the importance of the reforms of the Antonine age, we may admit that they were inadequate to reconstitute society upon an entirely new basis. The institutions of the empire were opposed to any such radical change; everything hung on the will of one man, who, to use the expression of Philo the Jew, was his own law. There was nothing to prevent the succession of such a man as Commodus to Marcus Aurelius, and this unworthy monarch could use the same unlimited power to undo the work of his father. It is true that the legislation which has passed into codes cannot thus be reversed with a change of sovereign; nay, it has even happened that under the worst emperors, private rights have received some new sanction in the text of the law; but this was but a dead letter, and did not prevent the constant advance of social decomposition and corruption of manners. The right of citizenship had been granted to all nations at the very time when civic rights had become purely nominal, except in some small provincial towns which had maintained their communal life, and found themselves perhaps happier under the rule of a remote power than when they were subject to the impositions of such men as Verres. The total absence of public spirit, the acceptance of an unlimited despotism, the servility of a cringing senate, the prostration of a nobility, which, when it was not leading the life of camps, knew no way of expending its treasures but in feasts and orgies, the degradation of a people which had changed its *comitia* for the circus, and lived by

imperial alms; all these vicious conditions, found in combination under the empire, were stronger than the best intentions and the most generous maxims. A virtuous prince arrested for some years the progress of decay, but even he could reach only that which was external. The vices of the system were not subdued; its regular action continued to produce the same results throughout the whole empire, in those lower strata of the people which were not reached by the influence of the head, great as he might be. The state soon fell back into the shameful and perilous condition in which the traitor played the part of an officious public officer, accusing the best citizens, and getting them condemned by reason of their many virtues. Suspicion and terror spread through all classes; the precariousness of the life they led gave a feverish zest to the search after pleasures, and lent force to the Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

In truth, that which was dying was the empire itself, in spite of its wealth and luxury. It had ceased to produce, and had become a consumer only. It lived by conquest and slavery, and its citizens ate more and more the bread of idleness. The land, once so fertile in harvests and in men, saw depopulation following close on the impoverishment of the soil. Celibacy had become nothing less than a national calamity. The rich man had no desire for the burdens of a family, and, being childless, he was surrounded by a tribe of courtesans, who, in their eagerness to be remembered in his will, loaded him with presents, and cost him far more than children would have done. Thus, merely in the light of self-preservation, it is suicidal for any

society to live merely for the gratification of the senses, since it thus sacrifices not only the object of life, but the means of subsistence.

The amelioration which we have noted in the legislation of the empire had not changed the fundamental principle of pagan society. Legal right was still a matter of privilege, as we shall have occasion to show when we come to speak of the Christian as compared with the pagan family. The oneness of the human race remained a beautiful theory or a sublime anticipation, but practically, inequality still prevailed, an inequality accepted and sanctioned by all the institutions of the empire. Not only was the condition of the slaves unchanged, in spite of some technical ameliorations of the law, but the social inequality between freemen had become even more pronounced. In the time of the republic the supreme magistracies were elective: the citizens possessed the dignity and independence of freemen. Under the empire the supreme authority was raised to such a height of power that men could only cringe before it; and the proud aristocracy of the world, stooping to so servile an attitude, dishonoured in itself the dignity of man, as Tacitus has nobly said, to a degree hitherto unknown. The imperial apotheosis might be, in the time of Augustus, a form of patriotism in a people accustomed by the religion of the hearth to deify its ancestors; but when such honour was done to monsters and fools, and still more when, in the extravagance of flattery or of terror, it was granted by anticipation to such wretches as Caligula, Commodus, or Heliogabalus,

humanity itself was outraged and degraded.* The imperial court, with its hierarchy of the friends of Cæsar, was an instance of senseless folly without a parallel.†

If all the Romans were thus reduced before the emperor to an equality of servitude, the old aristocracy sought compensation in contempt for the lower orders. Never was the line between patrician and plebeian more sharply drawn; never were social distinctions more strictly observed; never, practically, were the inequalities so many and so great. The freedmen and the provincials were held in slight esteem. The senator, forgetting that he was the first valet of the empire, crushed with his scorn all who were not of noble origin.

That which particularly strikes us in the second century is the growing subserviency of the third estate, that which came next to the knights. This order, after it had secured political rights with its tribunes, and had shown itself to be the sinew of the Roman legion, had played an important part in the history of the republic. The empire, not content with taking away its right of suffrage, lowered it yet further to the condition of a mere mercenary body, passing its time in turbulent indolence, the dangers of which could only be averted by costly largesses and the exciting pleasures of the circus. Those members of the third estate who were the dependants of patrician families, could as yet dispense with the dole of public money, thanks to the *sportula* which they earned by the daily obeisance paid to their patrons. But they were not to be long distinguished from the lower class of the same order, composed of freedmen and the poor of every sort.

* Boissier, "La religion Romaine," i. c. 2.
† Friedländer, "Mœurs Romaines," i. c. 3.

Soon it was not enough to despise these petty people; they must no longer expect equality in the eye of the law. Those among them whose names were inscribed on the public registers to receive the distribution of corn, composed the plebs of the city: their number was computed in the reign of Augustus at 200,000. They were not allowed any appeal to justice if they found themselves defrauded. The distinction became constantly more marked between the *honestiores* and the *humiliores*. The latter could not hold any office, and they alone were liable to bodily punishment and to the torture of the cross. Legal incapacity was the condition not only of the wretches who sought dishonest gains, but of all the poor—*propter paupertatem*.* It followed that poverty was in itself a cause for indignity. It is clear that any slight amelioration in the lot of the slaves was fully counterbalanced by this growing degradation of the lower classes. Nothing could show more decisively how powerless was the philosophy of the Stoics, how powerless were the emperor-philosophers themselves, to restore the true idea of humanity and that equality of rights which is its primary result. The degenerate Christianity of later ages was, in its turn, to connive at this system of privilege and of inequality, but this was in direct contraversion of its own principles, and of the noblest traditions of its origin.

The great minds, to which we give no niggardly meed of admiration, showed themselves equally unable to reform either the theory or the practice of their day. What they did was to make their beneficial influence

* See "Mémoire de M. Duruy sur la formation historique des deux classes de citoyens Romains désignés dans les Pandectes sous le nom d'honnestiores et d'humiliores. Appendix to vol. v. of "l'Histoire des Romains."

felt by the elect souls who gathered around them, and as the result of this influence we find some noble types of disinterested virtue, and some homes of severe purity. More than this we have no right to ask. They were met by invincible obstacles in the way of anything like a general regeneration of the family and of private life. The extravagant luxury of the Romans may be called in question. It may be shown that it did not cost such enormous sums as is usually supposed.* Self-indulgence was cheaper and easier under the bright sky of Italy than in our country and with our modern civilisation. At less outlay the Roman aristocracy could achieve an easy existence of sensuous delights. Slavery under the empire offered facilities to debauch such as have never been found since; the beautiful maidens of Greece and Asia Minor, bought at small cost or reared in the home of their masters, furnished the dancing girls and players on the lyre, who formed a feature of even modest entertainments. Sensual pictures, the work of facile and elegant artists, covered the unpretending walls of the little town house or suburban villa; there was no great cost in attending the theatre, to witness the representation of the most voluptuous scenes of Greco-Roman mythology. It is enough to read the books of amusement in which this generation delighted to judge of its morality, The surest way to please was to describe it to itself. Thus we learn to know it, not only in what may be called its historical scandals, but in the every-day life of its common people.

We will not quote from the great detractors of their age, like Juvenal, whose indignation has made them

* See the curious chapter on this subject in Friedländer. Vol. iii. 1.

orators, and who cannot forget their rhetoric in their objurgations. We will consult the authors who seek only to amuse their readers, and in whose writings we shall find pagan society graphically pourtrayed in all the varieties of life in town and country, with its medley of freedmen, gladiators, courtesans, court minions, and charlatan priests.

The "Golden Ass" of Apuleius carries us in the train of the unhappy Lucius, as he undergoes his humiliating metamorphoses, into the hovels and pleasant villas, into the small towns and villages. Everywhere we find libertinism defiling the domestic hearth—the wife unfaithful to her duties; lawless sensuality indulged without scruple and described in glowing language; unnatural crimes accepted as matters of course, and treated rather as subjects for ridicule than for rebuke. Over all this impure world hovers a vague dread of the unknown, which impels it to all sorts of superstitions, especially to those derived from the East, and to the use of magical arts.

The veiled goddess who is the object of universal adoration is the Egyptian Isis, resembling in every respect the Diana of the Ephesians, or the Cybele of Asia Minor, whose priests act an abominable part in the romance of Apuleius. It is ever the great mother, Nature, who is worshipped in her power of life and reproduction. Sensuality is her worship, and magic her mystery. On the one hand, she is besought to pour forth from her inexhaustible bosom the flood of sensual pleasures, and as the lawful limit of these enjoyments is quickly attained, the worshippers fling themselves eagerly into those excesses which seem to prolong them; on the other hand, they would conciliate the

hidden powers by charms and sorceries, and by thus parodying the supernatural, satisfy the imagination, and allay that craving for more than mortal aid which can never be wholly subdued in our frail humanity. This divinity with a hundred names, in which the efforts of paganism culminate as they began, this personification of natural and sensual life, has no longer anything in common with the charming nymph, born of the sea-foam beneath a smile of the sun, who, in her proud and ideal beauty, might be almost the image of purity. The Greek Venus is become, as at Ephesus, the black goddess of a thousand breasts, the monstrous giantess whose embrace, as runs the legend, is death to the old insatiable world.

Sævior armis
Luxuria incubuit victumque ulsciscitur orbem.

This lust, which consumes the triumphant empire, is the vengeance of Astarte on the Roman eagles.

There was an era in history when this fury of debauch and crime became a sort of demoniacal possession, which left on the Christian imagination an impression of horror and alarm, lasting through many centuries. It was under Nero that Rome was named the Babylon of the West, making herself drunk with the blood of the saints, after having poured out for all nations the cup of her iniquities. The "Satyricon" of Petronius preserves for us the faithful picture of the Rome of this age, so much the more repulsive that it is drawn with all the minute care of the artist. We shall not indeed venture to say that this tissue of vile stories reproduces the general life of the period, for we know how many pure and noble characters shone out against the dark back-

ground. Yet it is very significant that such a fiction should have pleased the court and the city: it proves at least that high Roman society loved to trail imagination in the mire, and from this the transition is very short to indulgence in the same vices. Like Messalina, this wealthy and elegant world delights in frequenting, at least in imagination, the haunts of the lowest sensual indulgence. This is the kind of satisfaction it derives from Petronius, and it was particularly relished by its mad Cæsar. The "Satyricon" might well be the pastime of the base and effeminate imperial artist, who placed all his powers at the disposal of his licentious imagination and equally perverted senses. Comedian and coachman at once, he takes equal delight in the society of the stable or of men of letters, and blends in his writings poetical myths with orgies that beggar description. Petronius suits him exactly; his book is that of a fine wit and of a debauchee; his only fault is that he is too subtle for an artist like Nero, who succeeded only in the tragedy of real life, and could better reproduce in actual fact the burning of Troy than he could sing it to the lyre. That such a book as the "Satyricon" could have been received by the great Roman world, is the most complete proof of its hopeless corruption.

After all, that which it depicts is not imaginary. The love which it describes is that which then prevailed—a love of the senses, knowing neither modesty nor true passion, and sparing neither the maiden in her bloom, the wife beneath her husband's roof, the great lady or the humble servant, childhood or old age. We find ourselves in a sink of vice, among innkeepers, watermen, actors of all sorts, who composed in great part

the lower classes of imperial Rome, and for whom it was necessary to provide degrading spectacles, exciting either by their licentiousness or cruelty. We are brought into contact with that humiliating struggle for the possession of dead men's goods, which was one of the features of the age. The luxurious but miserable life of the freedmen who had acquired wealth appears in all its moral hideousness, as the picture looks down on us from its frame of gold; and we thus learn how those, who but as yesterday bore the yoke themselves, make it heavy for their old companions in bondage. We are taken into the abodes of the slaves, and are initiated into their sufferings and their vile recreations. The dominant feature of the "Satyricon," in spite of its literary elegances, is lawless bestiality. It goes far to help us to comprehend the expressive symbol of the Beast of the Apocalypse, the faithful but repulsive image of this people, without soul, without conscience, sunk in the mire, and living only to feed, to play, and to kill.

The grandeur of the imperial city did not cloak its abominations in the eyes of the disciples of the gospel. From the time of its rebuilding by Nero, who used the fire as giving him a sort of expropriatory right for the public embellishment, the city offered much that was attractive to the eye. Where to-day the dead plain stretches its mournful pall over the landscape were then gay villas and innumerable palaces, temples which were museums, a forest of statues, the Forum covered with majestic buildings, the baths and the Coliseum, the procession of great ladies carried through the streets, attended by a brilliant train of elegant aristo-

cracy. All these things attested the splendour and luxury of the imperial city. But to the Christian they were all redolent of the apotheosis of idolatry, and he knew too well that in more than one quarter of the city its vilest excesses were indulged under the full light of day. He heard from afar the fierce shouts of the crowd assembled on the steps of the theatre, and he knew that they were aroused, either by the most immoral scenic representations, by bloody games, or by the agony of his brethren in the faith. None could be ignorant, moreover, of the scenes which transpired within the portico of villa and palace. How could the soul of the Christian at Rome but be stirred within him, and with even deeper cause than that which moved the great Apostle of the Gentiles as he stood, for the first time, on the Areopagus of Athens?

If we leave Rome, which, as Tacitus has said, was the confluence of all the vices of the empire; if we turn away from the somewhat highly-coloured pictures of Petronius, which, while they are not fictitious, do give us the worst side of Roman life, we still find the same prevailing corruption, though in a less degree. Let us enter that little city which has arisen, all living before our eyes, from its bed of ashes. There is nothing exceptional about Pompeii but its enchanting site. There can be few such relics of Eden upon earth, but the floods which overwhelm it are often terrible. Greece has slopes as graceful, but the outlines are more firmly defined; they might have been designed by the grand genius of Phidias, while here we are reminded rather of the chisel of Praxiteles. It is on these Neapoltian shores that the religion of nature

has found its chosen sanctuary, here that it displays its highest glory. Vesuvius, with its crown of smoke, has the same effect as that statue of death which was often placed in the festal banqueting-house, to enhance the mirth of the guests by the force of its sombre contrast, and to bid them, with the poet, grasp the fleeting pleasure, as a flower that would all too quickly fade. When we complete that which is still to be seen at Pompeii by the aid of the masterpieces preserved in the museum at Naples, we have the perfect picture of the paganism of the Decline, as it was exhibited in the ordinary life of the people.

Death entered this city as suddenly as the thief in the Gospel parable: there was not a moment to prepare for the awful catastrophe. Pompeii is here, before our eyes, just as it was on the day of its entombment. We note at once the injurious influence exerted upon the manners of the people by the travesty of religion which then prevailed. The place of honour is given to the divinities of the second order, especially to those patrons of pleasure, Bacchus and Venus. On the new Olympus voluptuousness reigns supreme. It has no place for the Jupiter of Homer, who, passionate as he is, has gleams of justice and grandeur, like the Greece of the heroic age. Still less shall we find there the Jupiter whose noble image, purified by philosophy, was sculptured by Phidias—"the great immortal, whom the blessed sing," according to Pindar's verse. The goddess of lust, the god of wine—these are the favourite divinities of this purely sensuous worship. The Neapolitan Venus is not the Venus of Milo, that Madonna of antique art; she is a courtesan. The marble throbs;

Pygmalion has made his statue glow with the impure fire which consumes his own soul. The Pompeian Bacchus in no way recals the mysteries celebrated under the name of that god, and which had a deep meaning. He is purely and simply the god of the bacchanals, crowned with vine-leaves. The grand old mythology is sacrificed to piquant anecdote. Venus weeping the Death of Adonis, Diana admiring Endymion or chastising Acteon, Leda and her Swan, the Rape of Europa, the Desertion of Ariadne—these are the subjects chosen by preference in the Pompeian frescoes, and treated sometimes with graceful lightness, but sometimes also with startling immodesty. This sort of delineation everywhere takes the place of high art. These pictures reproduce again and again the combats of the gladiators, thus pandering to one of the fiercest passions of a voluptuous and cruel age, and reminding us that a mind enervated by pleasure can only find the stimulant it craves in sanguinary spectacles. The slave, bowed down beneath heavy burdens, occupies a large place in these realistic frescoes. Impure gods, gladiators, and slaves—were not these the three pillars upon which this corrupt society rested? The little temple of Isis speaks at once of the growing intrusion of Oriental modes of worship, and of the fusion of the ancient beliefs in a pantheistic naturalism.

That of which Pompeii gives us the most striking exhibition, is the interior of the pagan house and its domestic life. Nothing could be more unlike a family home than these charming dwellings. All the arrangements suggest elegant leisure and sumptuous repasts spread for convivial guests. There is no inner life.

The frescoes which cover the walls reveal to us what was the frivolous existence in this little city, which was in no way an exceptional one. We find ourselves introduced to the toilet of a great Roman lady, surrounded by slaves, on whom her caprice inflicts any degree of punishment. We can count the vases of perfumed unguents with which she mars her beauty. We are present at the feast, with its licentious freedom. The dancing girls are before us in their fatal grace. We can even pass behind the scenes in the theatre, and see the preparations for the piece, and enter the apartment of the poet who is reciting his latest verses. Exquisite art—though at Pompeii it was imitative rather than creative—has lent its aid to embellish these pleasure-villas of a moderate bourgeoisie. For these were sculptured the dancing fauns, with their suppleness of limb and perfection of pose; the little Narcissus of such delicate grace, and the weary Mercury—the very embodiment of nonchalance and lassitude; for these houses, modest in comparison with the palaces of the aristocracy, were painted those enchanting frescoes which represent the most touching episodes of the Odyssey or of Greek tragedy. Art extended its domain in every direction. The plainest domestic utensils received an elegant form: lamps, pottery, jewels, all bore the same stamp. It is evident that the pagan of this period would have all his senses gratified at once.

We find also in Pompeii numerous traces of that fever of sensuality which was reaching its crisis. The pencil which depicted the most vile and licentious scenes had the same graceful lightness as the pen of

Petronius. The frescoes of Pompeii reproduce in warm and vivid colouring the most abominable scenes from the "Satyricon," and we recognise in them that fearful perversion of nature which was the consequence and the punishment of unbridled sensuality. The appalling description given of it by St. Paul in his epistle to the Christians of Rome, is fully justified by these pictures, which, obscene as they are in subject, show in the manner of their execution all the faithfulness of the skilled artist. It must not then be pretended that Juvenal, Petronius, and Lucian calumniated their age. This infamous side always exists in pagan life wherever it is not lifted above itself; and the fact that these writers dared to drag it into the broad light of day proves the depth of the social corruption. A generation which can no longer blush is in open insurrection against the first principles of universal morality.

This degradation is explained by the philosophical literature which was affected at Pompeii. The only papyri which have been exhumed are Epicurean treatises belonging to that corrupt school, which must have brought more certain ruin upon the city than the molten lava of Vesuvius. Doubtless, Epicureanism encountered at this time a noble and powerful adversary in the philosophy of Seneca, of Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. We have done justice to their high-souled efforts, to the advance made in the legislation by means of teaching, and to the purifying influences exerted by it over an enlightened minority, which certainly rose to the grandest moral elevation ever attained by any sons of paganism. Yet it is none the less true that Stoicism could go no further, and that it was content to shake

off the dust of its feet against a world which it could not reform; it wrapped itself in its mantle, to die erect; but it could not raise public morality from its fallen state.

There was a faith more full and living which was yet to make the lily of spotless purity blossom on this dung-hill, and to show itself more powerful, not only than the despotism of the Cæsars, but than the siren of these southern seas—the last and mightiest of the pagan divinities. This great reform, which was at once to broaden and humanise the ancient law, and to sanctify all the relations of life, was wrought without observation in the Christian home. There was lighted the sacred fire of the new city, never to be overthrown.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE FAMILY.

It would be misleading and untrue to history if we were to represent the life of the Christians as in absolute contrast with that of the pagans. Man is a frail being, ever open to evil influences, and only realising in a very imperfect manner his own ideal. The Church often had occasion to weep over the weak desertion of her sons in days of persecution, and in the rare intervals of peace and tranquillity she suffered no less from the prevailing laxity of manners, from the intrusion of frivolous worldliness, and from the influence of wealthy women who still hankered after their former style of living; sometimes also from rivalries among her adherents, who contended for the honour of filling her as yet humble offices. In spite of these imperfections, however, the Christian principle was so grand, so powerful, that it went on winning conquests over the hearts of men and radically transforming the whole moral life. But while it thus introduced a new element, it proved itself entirely in harmony with the general laws of the human conscience; it made no eccentric or conventional demands; it appealed only to the immortal and universal rule of duty as it is written in the depths of our being, seeking to free it from erro-

neous admixture, and to give it applications hitherto untried, but which were its logical results. The virtue in which such men as Socrates, Zeno, and Marcus Aurelius had gloried was neither repudiated nor ignored; it was but enlarged and freed from all that rendered it exclusive, proud, and powerless. In the disciples of the new faith this virtue shone out pre-eminently. Thus its apologists plead at the bar of universal conscience, and seek no other verdict in its favour; their cause would be lost if they had to contend for two codes of morality, two kinds of virtue.

The reform at which Christianity aimed began in the family. It had this two-fold object: in the first place, to humanise in some sort the legal right based upon privilege, by placing all mankind on the same moral level; and, in the second place, to restore purity to the domestic hearth. The natural affections would not have sufficed for this two-fold reform, because they are always more or less selfish. Love needs to be animated by a Divine breath in order to treat weakness as a title to respect, and to refuse ever to make an immortal being the victim of force or the tool of pleasure. We have seen how the first generation of converts made some approach to the ideal of the Christian family, as St. Paul conceived it. The great apostle, while maintaining the natural and necessary hierarchy in the family, enjoined the husband to temper his lawful authority by a respectful tenderness towards the weaker sex. Christian marriage he made a type of the mystical union between Christ and the Church, which is the highest realisation of Divine love upon earth; and the weakness of childhood was entrusted to the tenderness of the

father, who has for his pattern the Father of mercies, revealed to us in the gospel. Lastly, without provoking any sudden social revolution, Christianity declared the slave, as the freedman of Christ, to be the equal of his master in the sight of God, before whom both must appear as their common Judge and the Avenger of the oppressed. Paul gave bold expression to this principle of equality in the words, "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free." * We know with what vehemence he denounced and combated the vices of pagan life, and demanded on the part of Christians the most scrupulous purity. He thus formed what he justly called the Church in the house, the family being a truly religious association founded upon Divine love.

We must now consider what it became in the following age, when the new religion came into open contest with the old world of privilege and inequality. †

The moral equality needed first of all to be established in the marriage relation, which was so galling a yoke for the pagan woman. This equality could be assured without in any way destroying the rightful supremacy of the husband as the head of the household. The Church recognises the duty of the wife to submit to her husband in everything which does not involve disobedience to the yet higher authority of God Himself. Thus lawful subordination and necessary independence rest on the same foundation. The difference

* Gal. iii. 28.

† See on this subject, beside the works quoted, M. Paul Gide's excellent book: "Etude sur la condition privée de la femme dans le droit ancien et moderne, et en particulier sur le sénatus-consulte Velléien," Mémoire couronné par l'Institut. Paris, 1867.

of the sexes is an ordinance of creation, and the apostolic precept, that the man is to be the head of the woman, is in accordance with the teaching of nature. Women are not called to exercise the arts of the warrior; they are called to fill their place in the home.* Nevertheless they have all the rights of an immortal soul, made in the image of God and for His service. While the pagan wife was bound to hold good all that her husband said, even if it was in itself bad, the Christian wife carries her submission only to the point at which a higher authority supervenes, for her first duty is to obey God. If that which her husband commands her is evil, she is bound to resist him, cost what it may, after the example of the woman of whom Justin Martyr tells us, who, being united to a vile husband, brought most harsh and cruel treatment upon herself, and persecution upon her brothers, because she would not yield to his infamous requirements.† By thus using the *non possumus* of the Christian conscience the weakest woman can assert her inalienable dignity.

The principle of moral equality between the man and woman was affirmed by the Christians as it had never been before. "The man and woman," says Clement of Alexandria, "have the same destiny, and are bound to aim at the same standard of perfection."‡ The weaker sex gave to Israel as many heroines and holy women as valiant servants of God: paganism itself strove in vain to deprive woman of her dignity; for many a Greek and Roman mother showed that she had a heart as valiant

* Clement, "Strom." iv. 8, 62. † Justin, "Apol." ii. 2.

‡ *Ταύτης τοι τῆς τελειότητος ἔξεστιν ἔπ' ἴσης μὲν ἀνδρὶ ἐπ' ἴσης δὲ καὶ γυναικὶ μεταλαβεῖν.* Clement, "Strom." iv. 19, 120.

as her son's. * There is then no moral inequality between the sexes in the sight of God, whose judgment alone is final.

The royal roll of martyrdom shows the names of Christian women as well as men. The wife could face torture and death no less bravely than her husband, and shares equally with him the glory and the honour that belong to all who die for liberty and virtue. Heroism is no monopoly of the masculine nature; it is the appanage of every noble soul, and confers its patent of moral nobility on all who show themselves capable of it.† The martyrdom thus bravely faced by women means far more than the final death struggle in the circus; it includes also the daily reproach and malignity which faithfulness to Christian principles in the family entails, when the head of the house is an enemy to the gospel.‡

"The Church," says Clement, "is full of faithful men and women, who meditate constantly upon the saving death of Christ. Whoever fights under our banner has no need of scientific knowledge in order to espouse our philosophy. Whether barbarian, slave or Greek, old man, child or woman, our wisdom is open to all; and we are agreed that human nature can practise the same virtues with the due distinction of sex."§ Both man and woman belong to the same Christ, to the same Church; they share the same physical and moral life, look for the same salvation, and partake equally in the same grace and Divine love.‖ They have the same

* Clement, "Strom.," iv. 121–125. † Ibid. 8, 69. ‡ Ibid. 70.
§ Ἐπειδὴ μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἀρετὴν εἶναι τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως συμβέβηκεν. Ibid. 60. ‖ Ibid. "Pædag." i.

human nature.* The rights of humanity in the family were thus established upon the broadest and firmest basis.

Christian principle is tested not only in the great days of persecution, but in the humble course of every-day life, and in the discharge of ordinary domestic duties. There is one rule of primary obligation upon the Christian converts—to marry only in the Lord. If a woman is converted to Christ after her marriage to a pagan, she is not permitted to leave him: she is to seek by her gentleness and purity to win him to the faith, but is to be firm in the fulfilment of her new duties. The wise rule laid down by St. Paul on this subject remains in full force. A certain latitude is even given to the wife who finds herself in so difficult a position. She is allowed to adorn herself more than others, that she may attract her husband, and through her beauty lead him to a nobler love, provided only that she does not exceed and fall into evil.† But it is forbidden, or at least strongly deprecated, that a Christian woman should marry a pagan. Tertullian regards such an act as nothing short of apostasy. How will she be able to leave her husband's roof, to observe the worship of the Church? How can she fulfil the various demands of charity? How can she brave peril, to bring her offerings to the cells where the martyrs are languishing, to kiss their chains and wash their feet? Will she not, moreover, be subject to all the harmful influence of pagan life, with its impure feasts and luxurious

* Οὐκ ἄλλην τοίνυν ποὸς τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα φύσιν ἔχει ἡ γυνὴ, ἄλλην δὲ ἀνὴρ φαίνεται. Clement, "Strom." viii. 4, 60.

† Ibid. "Pædag." iii. 11, 57.

idolatry? Dragged into those scenes of pleasure which are the hotbeds of vice, she will hear the songs of the theatre instead of hymns and the reading of holy books; compelled to please her husband, she will deck herself in gay attire, and will be exposed to all the allurements of evil. When the poor Christians need succour, her stores will be closed against them. If she finds some tolerance for her faith, the reason will be that her husband desires to keep her in a state of abject dependence, that he may get possession of her dowry, or may use her as his slave, under threat of denouncing her as a Christian. Surely open opposition would be better than this precarious tolerance.* Beneath such a union there must ever be radical discord, and the end of it must be ruin to the Christian soul.† Is it not simply selling the soul, if such a marriage is contracted through desire of wealth, as is the case with numbers of women reared in opulence, and shrinking from any lower social position? Yet is it a poor bargain to exchange the incorruptible riches for the brilliant equipages and fleeting perfumes of the world.‡ The Christian woman who has married a pagan has then only herself to blame, if she finds in his house the temptations and the hardships of paganism.

It did not need legislative reforms to vindicate for the wife her true position in the Christian household. She is secure, in the first place, against the fragility of the conjugal tie, which among pagans might be broken at the mere caprice of the husband. According to the

* "Solis pejoribus placet nomen Christianum." Tertullian, "Ad uxor," ii. 7.

† "Omnia inimica, omnia damnata." Ibid. 6. ‡ Ibid. 8.

precept of Christ, the marriage tie can only be lawfully dissolved in case of adultery.* The Church, in spite of a growing repugnance, allows its spiritual directors a certain latitude in judging of a second marriage contracted after the dissolution of the first, for such a cause.†

In spite of the contempt of gnostics and ascetics, marriage is regarded by the moderate party, who are the true representatives of Christian tradition, as a Divine institution, worthy of all respect, and perfectly compatible with the law of holiness.‡ Children are held to be its flowers and its crown.§

Nothing can be more beautiful than a conjugal life, founded upon a common faith and consecrated to God; it knows no rule but His will, and finds its happiness far more in virtue than in wealth and favour.‖ "One hope," says Tertullian, "animates husband and wife; they obey the same law; they serve the same Master. Children of one Father, they are one flesh and one spirit. Their prayers are in com-

* Divorce is only allowed in case of adultery. "Ita si conditionaliter Christus prohibuit dimittere uxorem, non in totum prohibuit." Tertullian, "Contra Marc." xiv. 34. "Si inventum fuerit in muliere negotium impudicum." Ibid. The Church thus seeks to preserve the purity of marriage.

† In spite of the severe judgment of "Pastor Hermas" on this point, the Church did allow a measure of tolerance, as may be inferred from the ninth canon of the Council of Elvira, held in 305, which took a graver view of the case than was held in the preceding age. It decrees that the communion may be given in time of sickness to a woman who has been divorced from her husband on account of his adultery, and who has contracted a second marriage. "Nisi forte necessitas infirmitatis dare compulerit." Routh, "Reliq." iv. 261. The Western Church was the first subsequently to give positive sanction to the severer practice. See Smith, "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities." London, 1855. Art. "Digamy."

‡ Ἁγιάζεται γοῦν καὶ γάμος. Clement, "Strom." iv. 20, 28; "Pædag." ii. 10, 90. § Ἄνθη δὲ τοῦ γάμου τὰ τέκνα. Ibid. ii. 8, 71.

‖ "Talia Christus videns et audiens gaudet." Tertullian, "Ad uxor." II, 17.

mon; together they bend the knee, together they fast. They instruct and exhort one another, and bear each other's infirmities; they go together to the house of God and to the eucharistic table; they pass, hand in hand, through trials, persecutions, and pleasures. There is no dissimulation between them; they are of one mind in all Christian work; the sick are freely visited, alms freely given, sacrifices made without grudging. Their Christian zeal knows no check; together they praise God without fear in psalms and hymns of joy; their only rivalry is for His glory. Christ, looking down on such a union, delights in it. According to His promise, He is with these two who have set up no idol on their hearth."

The father is truly the priest of the house: his ministry commences with his wife, whom he seeks to direct into that path of quiet domestic virtue which best becomes her.* While the man is called to fulfil his various duties abroad, the wife's place is at home. Christianity adopts and sanctifies the old Roman device, which was the highest praise of the matron, *Lanam fecit.* The wife was to be devoted to domestic duties, to make with her own hands the clothes for her husband and children, to prepare the meals, and to be always ready to break the bread of charity to the poor and the stranger. Like the wise woman of the Proverbs, she is the joy and stay of her household, and hastens, like Sarah, to spread the hospitable board. The wife is thus the deaconess of the family: she is peculiarly the representative of Christian charity.† Plainly dressed in a garment of her own spinning, she

* Τὸ ἀκέραιον τῆς πραύτητος. Clement, "Strom." iv. 17, 110.
† Ibid. "Pædag." iii. 10, 49.

has all the beauty of a chaste simplicity; she is the glory of her husband, the true treasure of the house. Never eating the bread of idleness, the honey of charity flows from her lips; she opens her mouth with wisdom, and her children rise up and call her blessed.* The education of her children is her first task, and in this her husband bears his part; for the highest end of marriage is not to perpetuate the human race on earth, but to educate men for the skies.† We see from the stern rebukes addressed to Hermas in the "Pastor" how culpable negligence of this duty was thought to be. "Thou art the cause of great miseries," says the mysterious voice in his vision, "because of the prevarications of thy family, of which thou hast taken no more heed than if they did not concern thee." ‡ The children are to be trained in the school of Christ. They must learn from their very cradle how God regards humility in a vain world like this, and of how much account before Him is the love which keeps itself undefiled in the midst of the general corruption, and the fear of the Lord, which is the grand preservative from evil.§ The father and mother hear the voice of the Master saying to them, as to the women of Judæa: "Suffer the children to come unto me." It was by means of this early instruction that, on the night of the great Easter baptism, children of five and six years old were found ready to make the neophyte's profession of faith.‖ Thus was formed in the home that incomparable type of the pure and tender Christian mother, agonizing for the

* Clement, "Pædag." iii. 1, 67.

† Τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ παιδείας μεταλαβέτωσαν. Ibid. "Strom." iv. 17, 110.

‡ "Pastor Hermas," book i. vis. 1, 3.

§ Clement, "Strom." iv. 17, 110.

‖ "Const. Eccl. Egypt," ii. 64.

spiritual birth of her children, a type which is personified in the following age in the mother Monica.

The young girl is the object of most delicate care, that she may be shielded, like a flower, from every breath which would sully her purity. Her mother watches over her with jealous anxiety, to keep her away from the degrading spectacles of the city, and free from the contamination which lurks at almost every step of pagan life. Taking up the sentiment of Juvenal, *Maxima puero debetur reverentia*, the Christian moralist gives it the true application. "Let us do honour to youth, by training it in the admonition of the Lord."* It was this feeling of reverence for the young, which led the father of Origen to rise by night and kiss the bosom of his sleeping son, which seemed to him a sanctuary of the Spirit of God.

Both wife and child are thus raised from the miserable state to which paganism had reduced them. From his very birth the child in the Christian house is recognised as an immortal being destined for a higher life. It is this spark of the Divine within him which, more than his strength and beauty, makes him precious to his father and mother. The claim that is founded on humanity is thus consecrated by Christianity.

The same Divine principle which abolished inequality in the family became the guarantee of its purity. If marriage is respected as a holy institution, the Church cannot but be on its guard against those enticements to evil which, under the immoral conditions of pagan society, were presented on every hand and through every

* Τιμήσωμεν τοὺς νεούς παιδεύσωμεν τὴν παιδείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ. Clement, "Pædag." iv. 17, 110.

sense. The very air was charged with impure miasma. However carefully the Christian woman was guarded at home, she was exposed to constant danger abroad. Mixed social gatherings were full of peril.* Married women could only venture into them veiled: young girls, as they respected their purity and innocence, must avoid them altogether.† The state of society was such that mere contact with it was defilement. The Christian was enjoined to treat every young woman as a daughter, and every young man as a son.‡ Mere abstinence from actual sin was not enough: according to the new and Divine rule, the very thought or glance of impurity was to be eschewed as sin. §

The Church is not content with denouncing and proscribing sensuality in every form: it insists on the utmost simplicity of dress and manners among the Christians. Everything which is artificial and superfluous is severely condemned as a reproach to the simplicity of nature. The sterner moralists speak of vain ornaments as coming from the devil, who has ever been ready to mar the creation of God.|| According to Tertullian, the precious metals are given only to try us. "This age," he says, referring to the bloody conflicts of the Church, "is the age of iron, not gold."¶ The only glory which the Christian may covet for his mortal flesh is that of being crucified with Christ. The woman who takes delight in costly adornment will soon find herself, like the pagan Venus, bound to adultery by chains of

* Clement, "Pædag." iii. 11, 74. † Ibid. ii. 7, 54.
‡ Ibid. ii. 10, 90.
§ "Ac nos pudorem non facie sed mente præstamus." Minutius Felix, "Octav." 31. || Tertullian, "De cult. fem." i. 8.
¶ "Ceterum tempora Christianorum semper et nunc vel maxime non auro, sed ferro transiguntur." Ibid. ii. 13.

gold.* "Let the woman remember," Tertullian says again, "how fatal was the use she made of her power over man in opening to him the gate of perdition; and like Eve, penitent though pardoned, let her stand on the threshold of the Eden, closed to man by her fault but reopened by Christ, weeping holy tears like the sinner in the Gospel, and rejecting all the allurements of a corrupt age."†

The Montanists went to extremes on this, as on all other points. While admitting that beauty is not in itself contemptible, that it is, as Tertullian eloquently says, the happiness of the body, the adorning of the Divine creation, the festal garment of the soul,‡ fear of the peril it may bring predominates, and demands that even its legitimate attractions be hidden from view. "The chosen woman will always be beautiful enough for her husband."§ The wiser party avoid these exaggerations of Christian prudence. While they desire Christian women not to imitate the painted faces of their pagan rivals, nor to appear like them in long trailing robes of many colours, with mantles of Tyrian dye, and shoes sparkling with priceless jewels, the prohibition is given not only in order to avoid the appearance of evil, but also to allow freer play to their unadorned natural beauty and grace. Without making any concession to pagan luxury, the Christian woman is allowed to dress in finer stuffs than the man, and to adapt her clothing to her sex.‖ Will she seem less beautiful in the white

* Clement, "Pædag." ii. 12, 123.

† "Ipsam se circumferens Evam lugentem et pœnitentem." Tertullian, "De cult. fem." i. 4.

‡ "Felicitas corporis." Ibid. ii. 2. § Ibid. ii. 4.

‖ Clement "Pædag." iii. 2, 4; Ibid. ii. 12, 126.

robe, which is the symbol of purity, than decked out in the theatrical garb which completely disguises the wife and mother? * That which suits the stage can be little adapted for the life of the Christian, which is no comedy. †

We know what frightful prodigality characterised the pagan festivals of this age. Christian morality as sternly forbade this kind of luxury as extravagance of dress. The table of Christians was not to be loaded with costly viands. The fire of youth was not to be fed by the wine cup.‡ All the fowl of the air, fish of the sea, and flesh of beasts, could scarcely satisfy the voracity of the pagan orgies.§ He who owns that it is from the hand of God he receives his daily bread, is contented with the gifts of nature, and will not indulge that shameful gluttony which makes a god of the belly, and loves the song of the drunkard as the accompaniment to the hissing viands upon the hearth. There is no lack of joy at the table of the Christians, for the family has its lawful feasts, but the joy is calm and pure. It seeks no factitious excitement in the soft music of the lute players. All voices join in the praise of God, from the father to the little child.‖ They sing to the harp, as in the time of David. A cheerful mirth prevails, which never sinks into low buffoonery.¶

It was not forbidden to hold intercourse with pagans. It was plain that bonds previously existing could not be abruptly broken, that there were obligations of friendship and kindred. Tertullian himself admits this neces-

* Clement, "Pædag." ii. 40, 108, 110.
† Τὸν δὲ ἡμέτερον βίον πάντα μᾶλλον ἢ πομπὴν εἶναι. Ibid. ii. 10, 801.
‡ Ibid. ii. 2, 20.
§ Ibid. ii. 1, 3.
‖ Ibid. ii. 4, 41.
¶ Ibid. ii. 5, 46.

sity of allowing pagan friendships even to Christian women, though they were full of peril because of the inevitable contact with idolatrous practices.*

We know what part was played by the parasite in the Roman social feasts: the ridiculous flatteries and jests by which he paid for his entertainment were an indispensable part of the amusement. The place of this ignoble guest is taken at the table of the Christian by the passing stranger, who, as a brother Christian, is received with the utmost cordiality. The hospitality of the Christians is far larger than that of the ancients. The latter was chiefly confined to the family circle; the stranger could claim no welcome there merely as a fellow-man; there was an open place only for those who were in some way connections of the family. Christian hospitality, on the contrary, is offered purely on principles of humanity; the stranger is welcomed as a brother, without reference to any family archives; he is received as a son of the Father who is in heaven and a disciple of Christ. From whatever barbarous country he might have come, his welcome was like that of the angels in the tent of Abraham. He at once found his place at the family table and at the domestic altar.† There were circumstances under which this hospitality became a specially sacred duty, namely, when it was exercised towards a proscribed Christian. Sometimes the stranger who knocked at the door was a fugitive escaping from impending death. There is real danger in receiving such, the more if the house which is thus opened to him is already under suspicion; but even

* "Necessitas amicitiarum officiorumque gentilium." Tertullian, "De cult. fem." ii. † Ibid. "De orat." 21.

under these circumstances the law of hospitality is sacredly observed.*

The interior of the Christian home is to correspond in simplicity with the manner of life of its inmates.† The followers of Christ can be indifferent to all that wealth can procure while they seek the wisdom that cannot be bought or sold.

The contrast must have been great between such a home, ruled by the principles of the gospel, and the houses of the pagans. The Christian's dwelling was often a humble abode in one of the poor quarters of the city, for the Church gathered its members largely from the lower ranks of society. It is ascertained now, however, that a considerable number of noble and wealthy families had also become adherents of the new religion. To these the counsels of the Christian moralists were mainly addressed, for they alone were exposed to the temptation of luxury. It is easy to understand what changes were introduced by Christianity into their dwellings, from our knowledge of the pagan houses of the period. These were approached by a vestibule adorned with suits of armour and statues, and divided into two parts. There was first the *atrium*, separated from the vestibule by a small door: this had on either side wings which contained the dwelling rooms. In the centre was the *impluvium*, the basin which received the water from the roof. The *tablinum*, which was separated from the *atrium* only by a long veil, was the most import-

* Τούς διωκομένους διὰ πίστιν καὶ εἰς πόλιν ἐκ πόλεως φεύγοντας προσλαμβάνεσθε . . . ἵνα ἀνεξάρνητον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Χρίστου διατηρήσωσιν. "Const. Apost." viii. 45.

† Χρὴ καὶ τὰ κτήματα ἐπιδείκνυσθαι σύμβολα βίου καλοῦ. "Pædag." ii. 3, 37.

ant chamber. In it were kept the legal documents, the archives of the family, the title-deeds of the house, and those of the colleges to which they were attached. The hearth, with the household gods, is in the centre of the house: the statues of the ancestors are carefully kept, but are only exposed on days of special solemnity. The dining-room, or *triclinium*, has couches for nine guests, with a square table in the centre. A colonnade, walled and planted with trees, forms a second peristyle, around which are the miserable chambers of the slaves. On every hand are sculptured ornaments or painted representations of pagan myths.* The Christian who has inherited such a house from his ancestors will not feel himself obliged to forsake it, but he must obliterate all traces of paganism. Thus the walls are stripped of the frescoes which were devoted to the glory and to the loves of the gods. The Penates must be removed from the hearth. Eager guests no longer throng the peristyle. Their place is taken by the poor, whom the proud Roman patrician must now own as brothers and sisters, in spite of the plebeian blood in their veins. He himself serves them at the table of the Agape. Instead of awaiting at home the servile obeisance of those who fawn on him for his riches, he must rise with the dawn and repair to the holy assembly. His wife is no longer kept in obscurity, and only allowed to appear at the time of the luxurious feast: she is the mistress of his house, and goes wherever duty calls her. No Christian art has yet arisen to embellish the homes of the converts. Mural decoration of this kind is as yet reserved for the gloomy walls of the catacombs, but the favourite symbols of

* Becker, "Rœmisch. Alterth." v. 220.

primitive Christianity, the Good Shepherd, the Anchor, and the Dove, are constantly found on the vases and rings of this period. Often the Christian home served as the place of worship, especially before the creation of regular houses of prayer. Tradition reports that the Senator Pudentius lent his house for this purpose.* Possibly the *impluvium* may have been employed as a baptismal font. Under the trees of the second peristyle the humbler Christians often gathered, and raised their hymn of praise where once was heard only voluptuous song.

The pagan house was wont to be sumptuously decorated on the occasion of any family feast—when the young wife was brought to it in state, or when the inheritor of the family name repaired to the forum, habited for the first time in the garb of manhood. It presented an imposing appearance when the remains of the head of the family were carried to the funeral pile, accompanied in stately *cortége* by the statues of his ancestors. More humble, but more pathetic, were the solemnities of the Christian hearth. The young wife came to it with the blessings and prayers of the Church. The neophyte on whose forehead had been set the Divine seal felt a keener joy than the newly-made citizen on claiming his rights. No Roman senator was more proud of his noble ancestry than was the Christian family which had given a martyr to the Church. It was in times of suffering and sorrow that the peculiar beauty of the Christian character appeared, when it showed all the tenderness of which it was capable, and all the glory of its immortal hopes. Then, like the family of Bethany, who

* See Rossi, "Bulletin di Archeolog. crist." pp. 43, 44.

saw the Saviour weeping over the grave of their lost one, the Christian family realised the presence of the Divine Guest, sanctifying their sorrow, and giving glorious assurance to their hopes. None were more truly present than the absent loved ones, whose names were tenderly mentioned at every eucharistic feast.

This high ideal was not uniformly realised, but it was a grand thing that it should be accepted as the true standard of the life of the family; and that, however faintly and afar off, it should lighten every Christian home. It asserted the grand principle of human equality, and made sacred the claim of weakness, while it gave to the family affections the breadth of the Divine love. "We can walk in the footsteps of Christ," says Clement, "when our wife and children walk with us. A family is no hindrance to progress in the Christian course when all follow the same guide. The wife who loves her husband learns to walk with him step by step."* The rights of marriage are thus vindicated, and its duties become clear in the light of the gospel.

§ 2.—*The Christian Family and the Poor.*

We have seen that the Church liberally remembered the poor in her daily worship. The freewill offerings which accompanied the Eucharist were dedicated to the support of the indigent, of the widows and orphans, and through them of Christ Himself, who has made their cause His own. This collective charity was the product of the generosity of all the members, but individual charity could not be satisfied with this public

* Οὐκ ἄχθος ἐστὶν ὁ οἶκος συνεσπιπίσθαι μαθὼν ὁδοιπόρῳ σώφρονι. Clement, "Pædag." iii. 7, 38.

ministration of the Church. Every Christian family held itself bound to the practice of almsgiving, and the wife, who was ever ready to welcome the needy and the stranger, and to inquire into, and provide for their wants, was the chief almoner of this domestic charity. Many a Dorcas made garments for the poor, spinning the wool for them with her own fingers, and thus deserving more honour than the Roman matron, who cared for none but her own husband and children. Christianity did not confine itself to scattering its bounty with open hand. It also taught a new law of property, such as the pagan world had never conceived: it uplifted the poor, and created that true charity which is something far larger and higher than mere almsgiving. This important reform in the moral relations of men was also wrought without noise through the family circle. Here again the broad idea of humanity triumphed over narrow conventionalities and purely civil distinctions.

Property, according to the old Roman constitution, is the investiture by the state of the conquered soil: no other possession is guaranteed by contract, because the state has no concern with it. Justice takes no account of natural proprietorship: this is simply ignored. The legal title is everything. Equity succumbs before the formulas of mancipation or proprietorship conveyed by the state. It is clear that as the right of natural ownership is again recognised, the law itself will become more humane and equitable, more in accordance with that justice which puts good faith above the more or less elastic terms of a contract. It is the honour of the great lawyers of the empire to have adopted this

course, and to have begun to introduce equity into the Roman code.* Christianity was destined to tread down the yet more powerful barrier of Pharisaic narrowness, the political formalism of the ancient law, by showing that God alone is the sovereign dispenser of property. Thus understood, property is no longer simply the consolidation of conquest by the civil law; it is a trust devolved on the possessor, for which he must give account to God and to his brethren.

In the treatise of Clement on riches, we shall find the true idea of primitive Christianity on the possession of property.† He begins by acknowledging its lawfulness in so far as it proceeds from God; it must then be held in accordance with His will, in all honesty, and must be used for its true end. "The Lord," he says, "does not condemn riches, provided that those who possess them seek to know His will concerning them."‡ How could He disapprove that which He Himself has so lavishly provided in creation? The carefulness and toil by which riches are amassed are not blameworthy. The right of inheritance cannot be disputed. "What is gained," Clement continues, "by the renunciation of riches, if, in the midst of poverty, the heart is still going after its covetousness? It is not enough to be as the beggar at the gate, in order to be a saint; there must be the true poverty of spirit, which consists in not having the affections set upon earthly things, in being ready to surrender them, and especially to share them with those who suffer need.§ That which must be

* Troplong, "De l'influence du Christianisme sur le droit civil des Romains," pp. 32, 33.

† "Quis dives salvetur."

‡ "Ὅτι τοὺς πλουσίους οὐδένα τροπὸν ὁ σωτὴρ ἀποκέκλεικεν. Ibid. 26.

§ Ibid. 18.

banished from the Christian life is avarice, which, like a serpent crouching over a treasure, finds no enjoyment itself, and hinders others from gaining any. The man who yields to avarice finds his whole nature wither, and seems to have no longer a heart, only a piece of money in his breast.*

After all, wealth is but an instrument, and everything depends on the use that is made of it.† It is intended by Providence to fulfil a great purpose. First of all, it is essential to the very existence of human society, which cannot be carried on without the exchange of property.‡ But its ultimate end is to call forth charity in its practical expression in the care and succour of the poor. This work is not meritorious in itself, and when it is done through motives of envy or vain glory, it is no more pleasing to God than the greedy hoarding of the miser;§ but when it is practised in humility and love, it confers true moral dignity. Beneath the sordid raiment and haggard features of the poor may be discerned the Father and the Son. The earthen vessel carries great treasure.‖ The poor man is like the wounded traveller by the wayside, who needs to be lifted up, to have his wounds dressed, his wants appeased, his body clothed, and a shelter found for him.¶

In all these points Christian charity differs widely from pagan beneficence. The pity of the pagan may be stirred by one of those gracious influences which pass sometimes over the soul of man, bearing witness to its

* Οὐ καρδίαν ἀλλά μέταλλον φορῶν. "Quis dives salvetur," 17.
† Ὁ πλοῦτος ὄργανόν ἐστι. Ibid. 14.
‡ Τίς γὰρ ἂν κοινωνία καταλείποιτο παρὰ ἀνθρώποις, εἰ μηδεὶς ἐχοιμηδέν. Ibid. 13.
§ Ibid. ii. 19.
‖ Ἔνδον ὁ κρυπτὸς ἐνοικεῖ πατὴρ καὶ ὁ τούτου παῖς. Ibid. 33.
¶ Ibid. 28.

Divine origin. To some such sublime and exceptional inspiration we must trace the noble utterances of Cicero and Seneca upon our duty towards the distressed. Nevertheless, the beneficence of the pagan world remains, for the most part, narrow, self-interested, or at least marked by a political bias. It does not go beyond the limits of the country. The poor man, who is neither a fellow-countryman nor a family connection, but simply a human being in distress, rarely indeed finds any to compassionate his lot. There could be no true charity in the munificence of the Cæsars, who merely fed and amused the people to hold them in the more complete subjection.

The famous alimentary law of Trajan, which received new developments under his successors, was primarily a movement of policy. The emperor made ample loans to the rural proprietors, to encourage the tillage of the soil in Italy: in return he demanded that the interest of these large sums should be distributed among the children of the poorer citizens. His aim was in this way to check the depopulation of the provinces and the impoverishment of the soil, and to prepare soldiers for the armies of the empire. This accounts for the cessation of the help thus given to these young citizens when they had reached the age for enlisting. Evidently these liberal measures were not prompted by humane but by political considerations. Private individuals began to imitate the emperor, and foundations having a like object were multiplied. Munificent gifts were often bestowed on the civic authorities, to be used for the poor citizens. Such liberality was doubtless the indication of a great

advance in public feeling,* but it is none the less true that charity in its true sense was understood and practised only among Christians. With them it was the first duty. None of their brethren in the faith must be allowed to want. Their generosity was so well known, that it sometimes became an inducement to the unfortunate, to embrace the Christian faith.† The Church gives new force to the old Scripture words, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." "For," says Clement, "side by side with the hungry brother there is always found another to share his bread with him."‡ The community of spiritual things leads naturally to a community also of the inferior necessaries of life. There is no compulsion, but the simple application of the law of solidarity, that all those who live by the same life of the Word should have all things in common.§

This charity goes out to seek and to save that which is lost, beginning at its own door. The rich man, as Commodian has said, supports his poor neighbour as the tree sustains the creeper.‖ It is not necessary to have an abundance of this world's goods in order to show this practical charity. Often the humble Christian whose own wants are barely supplied can forego his bread for the sake of those who are poorer still.¶

Reaching far and wide its compassionate arm, this same charity gathers together large sums for the ransom of the captives: it is its joy to break the bonds of the

* Boissier, "Relig. Romaine," ii. 210.

† Κοινωνικοὺς τῶν ἐπιτηδείων μαθόντες τοὺς καθωσιωμένους τῷ Χριστῷ. Clement, "Strom." i. 1, 6.

‡ Ibid. "Pædag." iii. 7, 40.

§ Ibid. ii. 12, 120.

‖ Commodian, v. 460, 461.

¶ Origen, "In Levitic. Hom. x. 2," ii. 246.

prisoners, remembering how Christ has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these, ye have done it unto me." "Behold Christ Himself," says Cyprian, "in your captive brethren, and redeem from captivity Him who has redeemed us from death. Snatch from the hands of the barbarians Him who has snatched us from the grasp of the demon, and purchase with money the liberation of Him who purchased us with His blood."* To such appeals no Christian could continue insensible. The heroism of charity was sometimes carried so far that freemen offered themselves to serve instead of the captives.† Such was the fervour of the love of the brethren; but charity must not confine itself within these limits, it must embrace all mankind, and seek the good of every fellow-creature. Thus when cruel epidemics ravaged Carthage and Alexandria, the Christians were ever foremost at the bedside of the dying, never asking whether those whom they thus tended had not been among their persecutors. While terror reigned in the desolated villages, as their inhabitants were stricken down in multitudes, and the unburied dead were spreading death in the air, the proscribed Christians were the only helpers. "If we show kindness only to our own," says Cyprian to his brethren, "we shall be no better than the pagans and the publicans. We, as Christians, are called to return good for evil, and to pray for those who persecute us. Since we are the children of God, let us be like Him in compassion."‡ The Christians of Alexandria showed themselves no less devoted during the plague which broke out in their city. Many of them paid with their

* "In captivis fratribus nostris contemplandus est Christus." Cyprian, "Ep." 62, 2.

† Clement, "1 ad Corinth." c. 55. ‡ Pontii, "Vita Cyprian." 76.

life for the courage with which they braved the epidemic by the bedside of their worst enemies.* When charity has reached this height of self-abnegation, so that it can rise above all private enmities and national distinctions, it is truly a reflection of the Divine and perfect love. It embraces in its pity all who are embraced by the infinite compassion, and it is truly human, because truly Divine. The old selfish, exclusive principle is utterly subdued. When Cyprian contrasted the parsimony of the Church with the largesses of the world to its prince, who had shed no blood for his subjects, nor won heaven for them,† he used a rhetorical license to move the Christians to greater liberality; but he knew that the so-called sacrifices of the pagan world were made to its own evil passions, and cost it very little, and he could not deny that in that city of Carthage, where his noble example had been so eagerly followed, charity had appeared as a heavenly vision upon an accursed earth.

The share of the Christian family was a large one in this sweet and blessed activity. It not only contributed to the general offering, but used ungrudging hospitality to the outcast, the widows, and orphans who sought its succour. When the Agape was made distinct from the public worship it was celebrated in private houses, and every day the poor found a place at the family table of their richer neighbours. Love thus won its way into the cold and corrupt pagan world, there to effect that great moral transformation which all the inconsistencies and all the crimes of a degenerate Christianity have been powerless to nullify.

* Eusebius, "H. E." vii. 22. † Cyprian, "De opere et eleemos." 22.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY IN ITS RELATIONS TO SLAVERY AND FREE LABOUR.

§1.—*Christianity and Slavery.*

THE Roman house, alike in town and country, contained a number of dark recesses, into which the fresh air had scarcely leave to enter. In these miserable lodgings were crowded together a vast number of slaves, male and female, who sustained the weight of the ancient community, like the stalwart but wearied Atlas of the Naples museum, bowing beneath the burden of the world—a formidable giant, though tamed, who with one shrug of his mighty shoulder could upheave the globe—a creature to be made use of, but at the same time to be feared, and ever to be kept under an iron yoke. Slavery continued to be to the end of the empire, notwithstanding some unimportant modifications, the most daring negation of natural and human rights. It appears in this case the more shocking, because there could not be even a pretence of a difference of race, and corresponding inferiority of physical constitution. The crime of enslaving a human being remains the same, even when there is such a supposed difference; but the offence against the natural rights of a man is more glaring when it is one of the same blood and nation,

perhaps even of the same family, who is thus treated as a mere beast of burden; when in the slave-market is to be seen the same type of Roman as in the consular palace, the same family features as in the imperial household. Here we note the sternest application of that civic law which ignores everything but its own interests and privileges, and is utterly blind to the ineffaceable charter written on the brow of every human being. Slavery is but another manifestation of that purely political conception of society which formed the basis of the law of property and marriage in the ancient world. More than once already we have noted its fatal operation. We must now consider it more fully under another aspect, that we may measure the extent of the reform wrought by Christianity in regard to it, and bring into prominence its ruling principles.*

Slavery is not an accident of paganism, it is one of its fundamental institutions: it is but another development of the principle that might is right, which found its first application to foreign nations, and then fell with all its weight on every feeble and dependent member of the community or of the family. Captives are the property of their conquerors, and spare them all the toils of labour. "With my lance," cries the ancient warrior, "I till, I sow, I reap." The practice of slave piracy excites no horror, because the victims are only barbarians and foreigners. In the city itself slavery finds plenty of recruits, thanks to the right of the father

* The chief work on this subject is the very learned and complete book of M. Wallon, "Histoire de l'esclavage antique," 3 vols. See also M. Allard's excellent work, "Les esclaves chrétiens depuis les premiers temps jusqu'a la fin de la domination Romaine en Occident." M. Boissier has an important chapter on this subject, "La religion Romaine," vol. i. book iii. c. 5. See also Plautus' dramas.

to abandon his children, or even to make merchandise of them. The insolvent debtor could be sold in Rome at the time of the republic; the citizen who had evaded the census lost the rights of a free man. The traffic in slaves was everywhere authorised, and was highly productive.

The worst consequence of ancient slavery was not the amount of suffering which it entailed, great though that often was, but the degradation of the whole nature, and, so to speak, the destruction of the moral personality. The wrong done to the soul and conscience of the slave is nothing short of murder, even when materially his position is most favourable. If he is admitted to take part in the domestic worship, it is only because he belongs to the house, not that he is in any way one of the family. He is often excluded from the religious ceremonies of the city as a profane person,* though he is allowed to choose his particular divinities among those of his country. But even at the domestic or national altar the inequality under which he groans is made as galling as ever. He is in no way recognised as a man; he is but a thing, a chattel, that may be passed from hand to hand, and bought and sold, like the cattle or agricultural implements. In the eye of the civil law he has no rights; he cannot give evidence in a court of justice, he cannot enter an action; and, so long as the republic lasted, he could claim no protection against the cruelty and ill-treatment of his master, who had the power of life or death over him. As the slave was not supposed to have a conscience, if he was called to bear witness on any matter, he was subjected to torture to

* Wallon, "Hist. de l'esclavage antique," i. 299.

wring the truth out of him. He was not permitted to be a husband or a father.

Quem patrem qui servus est.*

His female companion might be taken to be his master's concubine, or might be made a prostitute, and he had no right of remonstrance. His children were counted among the live stock which his master might dispose of at will. Not only had he no rights, but, graver still, he had no recognised duties. He could not be brought to justice, as he could not claim it; he could owe nothing to the citizen who owned no obligation towards him.† He could not violate the law, for he was beneath the law. When he stole, he was treated like the dog who had robbed his master's yard. A man to whom marriage was impossible could not be an adulterer. His only law, morality, conscience, was the will of his master; he knew no other rule or obligation but to do his will. So says Menander: "Slave, obey the orders of thy master, just or unjust."‡ The slave has not the right to say no.‖ According to Aristotle, he can only be expected to exhibit the virtue of a tool, because he has no free will. The great philosopher went so far as to range his slaves among other animals, as incapable of citizenship. All this harsh legislation was based upon a very distinct doctrine. If Plato seems sometimes to rise to the realisation of the fact that all mankind has a common origin, he nevertheless accepts the degradation of the slave as a social necessity. His illustrious suc-

* Plautus, "Captiv." v. 508.

† "Nec servus quicquam debere potest, nec servo potest deberi." Ulpian, l. 41, d. xv. 1. ‡ Men. apud Stobe, "Floril." 62, 10.

§ Seneca, "De benef." iii. 17.

cessor took even stronger ground in relation to slavery, affirming that it was an ordinance of nature, which had created some beings to command and others to obey. It is nature which has provided that the being endowed with the higher mental faculties should rule as master, and the being adapted by his corporeal organisation to execute his orders, should obey as a slave.*

The more liberal views which prevailed under the Empire, and the dawning recognition of the dignity of man as man, left their traces in the imperial legislation, but were productive of very inadequate reforms. The emperors endeavoured to prevent the desertion and sale of children; the creditor was no longer allowed to sell his insolvent debtor; precautions were taken against the abduction of freemen, and against piracy. The conquest of the world was almost achieved, so that there were fewer captives to make bondsmen. Jurisprudence made the attempt to give some sort of legal rights to the slave, raising obstacles to the separation of father, mother, and children, when these were being transferred or sold. The money accumulated by the slave for his enfranchisement was guaranteed to him, and it rested with the masters whether or not he might be allowed to bequeath anything. The slaves might even carry their complaints before the tribunals in cases of outrage or cruelty, but they still remained liable to exceptional punishments. Domitian and Adrian made the mutilation of slaves unlawful. The latter emperor took away from the slave-owners the right of life and death, and required an appeal to the magistrates before the slaves could be sold as gladiators. The right of finding sanc-

* Aristotle, "Polit." i. 2, 13.

tuary beside the statue of the emperor was granted them. The imperial legislation gave liberal sanction to the formation of burial clubs among the slaves. The formalities of enfranchisement were simplified, and their result made more certain, in harmony with the noble principle of Ulpian, that the severities of law must often give way to the demands of liberty. The cause of the slave was pleaded in the name of humanity by these generous lawyers, who breathed into the body of jurisprudence the spirit of the Stoical philosophy.*

But these changes for the better were more in word than in deed. For, first, they never went so far as to declare the equality of all men in the eye of the law. It was idle for Ulpian to say that all men have an equal natural right, since he did not argue from this premise that the civil law must be in harmony with the natural, but admitted that the slaves formed a distinct class of mankind. It is he also, who in treating of the latent defects invalidating a contract of sale, likens the slave to the horse, and uses this brutal expression: "The slave, or any other animal whatsoever."† Marcus Aurelius spoke of the gladiators with the same careless indifference which he would have shown in the case of wild beasts.‡ The few ameliorations really wrought in the condition of the slaves did not change the character of the institution itself, or prevent its riding rough-shod over thousands of unhappy beings. The sales by auction were still carried on under the Empire, as we

* See, on the whole jurisprudence of the Empire, Wallon's book, before quoted. Vol. iii. c. 2.

† "Servus vel animal aliud." Ulpian, "Dig." vi. 1, 15, § 3.

‡ Marcus Aurelius, "Comm." vi. 46.

gather from one of the most witty dialogues of Lucian. The necessity under which the emperors found themselves, of constantly enforcing by fines the decrees which had been passed in favour of the slaves, shows the powerlessness of this legislation. What could its influence be, when its author was a Nero or a Domitian? Everything that tended to increase the general depravity reacted upon the slaves, who were ever at the caprice of their masters. There could be little profit for them in appealing to the tribunals, when the judges were known to be cowardly or corrupt. It is remarkable that the informers, who filled the post of public accusers, never brought forward a single complaint of the infraction of the imperial decrees in favour of the slaves, as though those decrees were a mere dead letter.* We must not forget, moreover, that while the humanitarian principles of Seneca are fully expounded in a treatise on Anger, which gives the most fearful picture of the condition of the slaves subject to all the barbarity of their domestic tyrants, the civil code might still be summed up in these words: Any conduct is lawful towards a slave.

If we make a few honourable exceptions among the Roman aristocracy, we shall have to admit that the graphic picture which Plautus gives of the slavery of his day is still true in the early ages of Christianity, at least in its main features. The accumulation of wealth had vastly extended the system. In the city the slaves could not be numbered: they filled all offices, from the meanest and most servile, to those which brought them into personal connection with their masters. In

* Allard, "l'Esclave chrétien," p. 115.

the fields the labour was made doubly galling under the lash of the *villicus*, a kind of slave overseer, who revenged himself for his own slavery by cruelly oppressing those beneath him. The class thus oppressed was the *genus ferratile*,* the countless crowd of famished labourers, who were goaded on to their daily toil by the lash, and often under threat of death. Their ranks were constantly swelled by servants, who, in punishment for some misdeed or want of skill, were sent from town houses, to turn the mills or languish in the gaols.

These obscure masses were kept under a reign of terror, but there brooded in their midst a dumb desire for liberty, which burst forth now and again in revolt and massacre. Judging from the description given us by Apuleius of the slaves in the country, their lot was little changed since the days of the ancient comedy. We see them clad in miserable rags, with pallid faces, their backs torn with the lash, with shaven heads, a mark set on their brow, and their feet fettered with a ring.† According to Seneca, a dull despair characterised the slaves, and suicide was common among them. The old slave in the comedy of Plautus was but a type of the whole class, when she explained the cause of her extreme dejection in these bitter words: "I am eighty-four years of age, and I am a slave."‡

Death was a lesser evil than the ignominy which was the common lot of the female slaves. Slavery was the great nursery of prostitution and debauch in every form.

* Plautus, "Mostellaria," v. 18.

† Apuleius, "Metamorphoses," 9. Edition Panckoucke, ii. 190.

‡ "Annos octoginta et quatuor,
Et eodem accedit servitus."
Plautus, "Mercator," v. 666, 667.

The master could sell at will the women and young girls belonging to him, unless he chose to keep them for his own gratification. These victims of cruelty and wrong were not half-savage creatures; they were unhappy daughters of Greece and Asia, possessing all the grace and charms of their race. The law gave no protection to the female slave against dishonour. It was understood that she had no option, if her master made any claim upon her; that he might even lend her to whom he pleased. The free woman alone had the right to resist the solicitations of a debauchee. "The Julian law," says Papinianus, "protects the honour of free persons only."*

Diocletian exonerated a Roman citizen accused of improper conduct towards some unhappy women, "because," said the emperor, "it has been proved that the victims of his misconduct were only slaves, not free persons."† The position of the children who had fallen into slavery was no less pitiable. They were commonly made minions or gladiators, as is shown by innumerable inscriptions of the imperial age. Abandoned by fathers whom they never knew, there opened before them a prospect too dark for description. In the vilest quarters of Rome were to be found these deserted children, the offspring of some of the noblest families in the state.

The Nemesis of slavery upon the oppressors was swift and sure. Through it the Roman people learned to despise free labour, that which alone is productive, and thus sterility spread over the fruitful land—the land

* Papinianus, "Dig. xlviii." v. 6.

† Diocletian, anno 290, "Cod. Just." ix. 9, 25. Allard, work quoted, p. 174.

of harvests and of heroes. It was slavery which made the descendants of those heroes cruel and cowardly debauchees. It was slavery which corrupted the youth entrusted to its charge, whether through dastardly fear of irritating a future master, or by the mere contagion of the vices natural to the slave class. The cry of the unhappy father to his slave, "Wretch, thou hast ruined my son!" must have been often heard in Roman houses.

The enfranchisements which became so numerous under the empire in no way prepared the abolition of slavery. They were the exceptions which confirmed the rule. For a long time the freedman enjoyed only a partial liberty. He could not marry as he pleased; his right of suffrage was restricted; his former master retained a share in his inheritance. We know how high the freedman raised himself by dint of climbing. He became often a sort of *maire du palais* under the Cæsars, but on the very steps of the throne he kept the heart of a slave. There was no power to change his nature in the famous formula, *Liber esto*, and the freedmen formed the most degraded portion of the wealthy classes. The "Trimalchio" of Petronius represents them truly in their private life, as Narcissus represents the *parvenus* of the political world. There was scarcely a more miserable being than the freed woman: she was condemned in Roman society to the trade of a courtesan, and she had as little protection from wrong as the slave. Plautus gives a vivid description of the miserable lot of the freed woman in whose heart is awakened a longing for a pure and disinterested love. "You talk about your heart," says her companion, jeeringly. "Where is

it then? Women have no heart."* Matrons alone are entitled to a chaste affection.†

Your heart, your conscience, where is it? This is the question addressed with bitter irony by the proud pagan aristocracy to the slave. The slave is, in their theory, nothing but a body;‡ hence they do not hesitate to add, "The servile head has no rights."§ The deep degradation of slavery is briefly expressed in these two sayings. Sometimes the slave has lavished on him all the care a master can bestow, in order to cultivate his highest gifts of intellect; but the end is still the same—the profit or pleasure to be made out of him by his owner. It cannot be said to him, Where is thy wit? for wit he has, and if a Greek, wit of the finest order; but it will still be said, Where is thy heart? where is thy conscience? He is still a mere appendage to the establishment, he is not a man; there is no thought of awakening his moral life, and treating him as a being who has rights and corresponding duties. After lowering him as a slave, society cannot make him a citizen by simply giving him his freedom. Do not even free men become servile in soul by the withering contact with slavery? As to the crowd of servants who herd together as they may in the towns or in the fields, these have their rations given them if they are docile. If they prove rebellious, they are scourged and sent to the mill or to the gibbet; but the idea never occurs to their owners that a ray of intel-

* "Quid id? unde est tibi cordolium?"
Plautus, "Cistellaria," v. 67.

† "Matronæ magis conducibile est istuc,
Unum amare." Ibid. v. 80, 81.

‡ *Σκεύη καὶ σώματα.* These words refer to the market in Athens where slaves were sold. Allard, work quoted, p. 148.

§ "Servile caput nullum jus habet." Papinianus, "Dig." iv. v. 3.

lectual light might be cast into these stagnant deeps of society. The masters of morality, who occupy themselves with the imperial household and the aristocracy, cannot stoop so low. Loudly as they have proclaimed the manhood of the slave, these are not the men who will ever treat him as a fellow-man, and open to him some better way of escape from the dreary darkness of his existence than mere sensual indulgence, or a favouritism scarcely less degrading in its moral effects.

It was the work of Christianity to give the dignity of a moral being to the abject creature who was still treated as outside the pale of humanity, even when the disciples of a lofty philosophy had vindicated for him in theory certain social rights. The religion of the gospel could bring nothing less than universal enfranchisement, as its very name and nature indicated; for it was the religion of redemption, the great ransom of the captive race of man. It regarded every son of Adam as the slave of sin, and offered to all the same deliverance purchased by the blood of the cross. Hence the first effect of Christianity must be to break down the hitherto infrangible barrier between free men and slaves, since it laid down as a fundamental principle that all were found by nature under the same yoke, and all were called by grace into the same liberty. Let it be observed that this was not merely one fine-spun theory the more, in a time when there was a plethora of such theoretic teaching. Redemption was the greatest of all realities for the Christian, verified by him in constant experience, and accepted in all its consequences. The point of view from which all human things were regarded was thus completely changed, and

a corresponding social transformation must follow as the effect of a religion which was thoroughly practical.

The Church set itself at once to its task of liberation and reconstruction; or, rather, it achieved this result almost unconsciously, and without systematic effort, by simply fulfilling the duties which immediately presented themselves in the Christian life. The Church did for the slave what it had done for the family; it wrought a moral reformation, without coming into conflict with the legislation of the Empire. It was no part of its spiritual calling to proclaim, or to demand from a legal point of view, the abolition of slavery: to have done so would have been to make itself a political power, and to enter on that hazardous game of force which involves the cause of principle in the uncertain issue of an armed struggle, and exposes that which is gained by the sword to destruction by the sword. Nothing could have been easier than for Christianity to proclaim a servile war, if it had turned to its own account the muttering wrath which was working like secret leaven in the hearts of the oppressed people. More than once already, before this period, the Empire had been threatened with one of those great rebellions which were but a savage and sanguinary vengeance, fruitless of good results. To stir up another such rebellion would not have advanced the cause of universal liberty one step; and in it Christianity must either have perished, or have ceased to be the religion of the Spirit. Moreover, the slave was not truly liberated who had broken only his material bonds; he might retain all the vices of servitude, and might make the most tyrannous use of his newly-acquired freedom and power. Under

such conditions, slavery would be perpetuated with all its horrors, the only change being that the oppressed would become the oppressor. It was therefore of supreme importance that the Church should not provoke a convulsion of society, in which all would be risked, and all lost. We see, then, ample reason why the ancient hierarchy of the family should have been sincerely respected by the Church, and why the slave who sought a place on the bench of catechumens was required to bring from his master a certificate of his good conduct.* This requirement, which could only be carried out when the slave came from a Christian household, was a natural consequence of the legal maintenance of the institution, for it would have been impossible, without breaking entirely the bond of dependence between master and slave, to have accepted him without first making the necessary inquiries of the head of the house as to the conduct of the new catechumen, and then asking his approval of the step, subject always to the final judgment of the Church. It is perfectly clear, then, that slavery was not formally abolished by the Church, but it is none the less true that the institution was being steadily undermined by the change wrought within it. When the miserable creature who had been treated hitherto as a mere tool, a soulless body, was raised to the consciousness of his own moral dignity, his rights and duties, the pretext for holding him in slavery was removed; and Christianity, appearing first as the protector of the slave in his weakness, was constantly tending towards his com-

* Εἰ δοῦλός ἐστι πίστοῦ καὶ ἐρωτάσατω ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εἰ συνευδοκεῖ, Const. Eccl. Egypt." ii. 40.

plete enfranchisement. The Christian home was in this, as in all other aspects, the cradle of social reform, and it was by its fireside that the idea of humanity was thus vindicated from its grossest contradiction.

The first thing to be done was to remedy the actual condition of the slave, not using him merely as an illustration in a philosophical harangue, but taking up his cause and defending him from the ill-treatment heaped upon him. In spite of the derision of Celsus, Origen boldly declares that Christianity turned by preference to the outcasts of the old world, beginning with the slave, of whom no one had thought.* The Church enjoins, before all else, gentleness, patience, and justice, on those who are masters; it requires them to treat those who belong to them as men, not as animals,† to show them all equity and kindness, and never to fail in patience towards them.‡ Harsh treatment to a slave was made a sufficient ground for excommunication; the name of Christian was forfeited by those who ill-treated their dependants.§

Nor was it enough merely to give protection to the slave: he must be raised morally, instructed in the truth, and led as it were within the portals of light. To this end the Christian master must be willing to humble himself to become the voluntary teacher of his slave, aided in this task by the zeal of his brethren. This holy and difficult duty was lovingly fulfilled. "We

* Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 49.

† Οὐδὲ μὲν καθάπερ ὑποζυγίοις τοῖς οἰκέταις Χρηστέον. Clement, "Pædag." iii. 11, 74.

‡ "Servum domino patientia commendat." Tertull. "De patient." 15.

§ Φευκταῖοι καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν οἰκέταις πονηρῶς Χρώμενοι. "Const. Apost." iv. 6.

feel ourselves debtors both to the wise and to the unwise," says Origen. "We refuse no one, not even the common slave. We turn to him as to a child or ignorant woman, hoping to make him better." * Pamphylus of Cæsarea, the disciple and apologist of Origen, carried the education of a young slave so far that, after having brought him up to his own level, he made him wear the philosopher's mantle, to show that he had become truly an adept in the Divine wisdom. The slave subsequently followed his master in the path of martyrdom.†

The gospel message found a soil well prepared to receive it in the broken hearts of these pariahs of the West. As soon as they received the Christian faith they were raised to a level with the freemen in the Church. There was no trace of social difference among the Christians in the hour of worship: ‡ in the house of prayer the only lines of separation were between the catechumens and the faithful, and between the sexes. Not only did the slave break the bread of the Communion with his master, and receive from his hand the commemoration cup of blessing, but his place might even be above his master's. He might have been long a believer, while his superior was as yet a catechumen, or under some disciplinary humiliation. Every day such strange sights were to be seen—the master waiting at the threshold of the house of prayer, while the slave shared in all the privileges of full Christian worship. For the slave who could bow his knee side by side with the freeman in adoration of the same God, there could

* Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 49.
† Eusebius, "De Martyr. Palest." 11. ‡ "Const. Apost." ii. 58.

be no more the galling sense of dishonour or inferiority attaching to his condition. Thus it is said in the "Apostolical Constitutions" that the master should love the slave like a son or a brother, because of their common faith.* More than this. The slave might even accept office in the Church if called to it by the votes of his brethren, and might become a deacon or a priest. The live coal from the altar touches his lips no less than those of the patrician Cyprian, and he may become the exponent to the people of the will of God. Subsequently, after the overthrow of paganism, it was required that slaves holding office in the Church should first be enfranchised by their masters; but it was impossible to make such a requirement before the time of the Christian emperors. It is certain that a servile origin was not regarded as any obstacle to the attainment of the highest honours in the Church. Callisthus, at the commencement of the third century, became bishop of Rome, after having been a slave. His election was not disputed on account of the lowness of his former state, but simply because he was judged guilty of certain crimes.†

The slave being thus treated in the Church on a footing of perfect equality, of necessity found his lot lightened also in the Christian home. With the seal of God set on his forehead, he was conscious of an inalienable dignity. Beside, the religious life was not restricted to any sacred day or place; it made itself felt in all the daily walks, and domestic piety was no less highly esteemed than public worship. At the hour when the father

* "Ο κύριος ὁ πιστὸν ἔχων οἰκέτην ἀγαπάτω ὡς υἱὸν ἢ ὡς ἀδελφὸν διὰ τὴν τῆς πίστεως κοινωνίαν. "Const. Apost." iv. 12.

† Allard, work quoted, p. 230.

assembled his household for praise and prayer, the slave's voice was heard in adoration. His "Amen" responded to the petition of his master, and his hands were lifted up to the Father who is in heaven, the Judge and Avenger of the oppressed. Chrysostom alluded to the most beautiful practices of the previous age when he said to the father of the family: "Thou canst not teach Christian doctrine to all the people, but thou canst make thy slave better. I am but once or twice a week in the midst of you, but thou hast thy disciples constantly gathered together in thy home—thy wife, thy children, thy slaves." *

It was not always the slave who was thus instructed by his master; often the master was led by his own slave into the way of truth. Like the captive Israelite maid, who sent the great Syrian captain to the prophet, so the despised slave often became the apostle of the house. The "Acts of the Martyrs" contain abundant instances of masters converted by their servants.† The pious slave who, after carrying in his arms the father of Monica, helped to lead the daughter to God, is no uncommon type in the annals of primitive Christianity.‡ It was doubtless often by the mouth of a slave that the gospel was proclaimed in those obscure and miserable dwellings which called forth the biting raillery of Celsus.§ It follows naturally that the slave, being admitted to such a position in the Christian home, was no longer denied the privilege of forming family relations for himself. He was delivered from the deepest of all degradation, that of being treated as a being outside or beneath

* Chrysostom, "In princ. act. Homil." iv. 2.
† Allard, work quoted, p. 300. ‡ Augustine, "Confess." ix. 8.
§ Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 58.

the moral law. He might be condemned by the Church for adultery, because his marriage was recognised as no less lawful and sacred than that of the free man. On the same principles the female slave could be no longer exposed to the caprice of her master, but might become, like any free woman, his lawful wife.* The great Christian moralists of the fourth and fifth centuries only perpetuated the traditions of the preceding age when they cast the shield of their protection over the feeble and dependent. Chrysostom eloquently declared the seduction of a slave to be as great a crime as that of a queen, because God avenges not the quality of the injured person, but Himself;† and Clement of Alexandria had already in his day charged masters to respect their men-servants and maid-servants, by keeping from them every corrupting spectacle.‡

We find the slave treated in Christian communities not only with benevolence but with respect. Woman thus treated shows, though a slave, her innate purity and modesty. The picture which Hermas gives us of the young female slave, proves how she who was once regarded as the mere toy of the master could become a chaste and noble woman, respected and beloved as a sister.§ Christianity will show in its ranks women not less courageous than the Roman Lucretia, who will gladly meet death rather than infamy, as we learn from the "Acts of the Martyrs." This charter of the moral freedom of the feeble and the oppressed, to which they

* Πιστὸς ἐὰν ἔχῃ παλλακήν, εἰ μεν δουλὴν, παυσάσθω καὶ νόμῳ γαμείτῳ· εἰ δε ἐλεύθεραν, ἐκγαμείτῳ αὐτὴν νόμῳ. "Const. Apost." viii. 22.

† Chrysostom, "In 1 Thess. Homil." v. 2.

‡ Καὶ τοὺς οἰκέτας αἰδεῖσθαι χρή. Clement, "Pædag." iii. 3, 34.

§ "Cœpi eam diligere ut sororem." Hermas, "Visio." i. 1.

have appended the sacred seal of blood, is nobly expressed by Chrysostom in the following words: "There are limits imposed by God on the obedience of slaves; laws which they are not suffered to transgress show where their obedience must cease. When the master's commands are not contrary to the will of God he is to be obeyed, but no further, and herein is the liberty of the slave." *

Slaves proved themselves not unworthy of the Christian's crown of martyrdom. Blandina, who died joyfully, torn of wild beasts in the arena, was a young slave. Evelpistus the slave met a cruel death on the same day as Justin Martyr, and with no less of courage and composure.† "More than one slave," says Clement of Alexandria, "has finished his course with joy by dying for the faith, in spite of his master." ‡ Thus the slave took his place among the heroes of the faith, and in doing so vindicated for himself a perfect equality with the freeman.

Great indeed was the moral change thus wrought by Christianity in the condition of the slave. It had given him again a heart to love, a conscience to discern the law of duty, and a firm will to obey it. Thus he took his place in the Church as a creature of God, one of the redeemed of Christ, a member of His mystical body, a priest and a king. All the grades of the spiritual hierarchy stood open before him up to martyrdom, the highest of all. The moral equality which is the consequence of this inward change is both realised in practice and affirmed in principle. Lactantius, who is a sur-

* Chrysostom, "In 1 Corinth. Homil." xix. 4, 5.
† "Acta S. Justini," 3. ‡ Clement, "Strom." iv. 8, 62.

vivor of the militant Christianity of the third century, gives clear and full expression to this equality. He says: "Neither the Romans nor the Greeks were able to maintain even justice, for they had established conditions of inequality among men. Equity must be wanting where all are not on an equal footing: inequality excludes justice, the proper sphere of which is to render equal all men who have received life under the same conditions."* "Masters," says Clement, "render justice and equality to slaves."†

The pagan world fully recognised the significance of this great moral renovation. "The legislator of the Christians," says Lucian, "has persuaded them that they are all brothers."‡ When the great cynic depicted an ideal society in which the poor and the barbarians could acquire the right of citizenship, provided they had the love of good in their hearts, and in which the distinction of freeman and slave was no longer known, he was simply painting what existed in actual fact before his eyes.§

In truth, in spite of all the prudence which it was bound to observe, in order not to go beyond its proper spiritual sphere, primitive Christianity regarded slavery as an abnormal fact, the continuance of which was to be deprecated. "We teach the slaves," says Origen, "how they may gain the soul of free men, and obtain by faith a true emancipation.‖ By what right, then, can the free man be kept in slavery?" The great Alexandrian does not hesitate to draw the true conclusion

* Lactantius, "Div. Inst." v. 15.
† Clement, "Strom." iv. 8, 67.
‡ Lucian, "Perigr." 13.
§ Ibid. "Hermotin." 24.
‖ Καὶ δικότριψιν ὑποδεικνυναι, πῶς ἐλεύθερον ἀναλαβόντες φρόνημα. Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 55.

from the principle thus laid down, though he does so indirectly. "No one," he says, "under the Jewish economy was to serve more than six years. Could there have been a fairer way of adjusting the relations of master and slave?"* The Jews were then right in retaining their own legislation; they would have been to blame if they had not felt its superiority. If the Jewish institutions were thus commendable because they made the tenure of slavery short, it may be concluded that it is most desirable to see it disappear altogether. Such was in truth the mind of the Church, hence it always favoured enfranchisements;† and as soon as the age of persecution was passed, the legislation on the subject of slavery became incomparably more lenient and humane. The union of Christianity with the Empire, however, complicated the conditions of moral reform. The Church lost much of her true liberty when, no longer confining herself within the sphere of private life, she became involved in politics at a period when the State was still thoroughly permeated by the old pagan spirit. Slavery, though greatly modified, was in reality consolidated by the union of the Church with the Empire; for religious society was constrained to slacken its steps to the pace of the rude protector on whom it had chosen to lean. Christian preaching endeavoured in vain to conjure the vices of the institution, but the seeds of justice and charity which it had scattered broadcast over the

* Origen, "Contra Cels." v. 42.

† In the Third Book of the "Apostolical Constitutions" the Christian is enjoined to use his property in freeing the slaves—*ῥυόμενοι δοὺλους*. "Const. Apost." iv. 17; Wallon, work quoted, ii. p. 364; Allard, work quoted, p. 321.

world were presently to spring up and bear fruit. It is a humbling reflection how many ages it has taken mankind to realise the most direct results of the principle of moral equality which, as we have seen, was so deeply rooted in the Christian conscience in the days of its early independence, before its persecutors had become its powerful and perilous protectors. Some of the sources from which slavery was fed, however, finally dried up; parents were no longer permitted to desert their children, and unfortunate *alumni* ceased to encumber the slave-market. Help towards the education of their children was granted to poor parents.*

§ 2.—*Christianity and Free Labour.*

One of the most disastrous consequences of slavery was its tendency increasingly to degrade free labour. The recognition of free labour was the death-blow to slavery. The rich were accustomed to have large domestic establishments. Every Roman lady had for her toilet a whole squad of male and female slaves, and an equal number attended at every meal, each having his strictly defined duties. The garments of the family were made in the house, and there is a story of a Roman patrician whose changes of raiment numbered several thousands. Troops of slaves tilled the ground under the stern oversight of the *villici*. The table of the Roman master in Rome and in his splendid country villas was lavishly provided. While in the towns the artisans found no opening for their work, small proprietors in the country were ruined by the large estates, or momen-

* See Wallon, work quoted.

tary relief was given by the system of loans organised under Trajan's elementary law; but from the beginning of the third century this precarious resource seems to have failed, and the famished farmers flocked into the towns. The rich were not content with receiving merely personal service from their own slaves; they hired them out, or made them work for their benefit. Entire manufactories were supplied with men in this way. We must not be misled by the frequent mention in the inscriptions, of corporations of artisans: even these bodies employed slaves in the same way, and thus aggravated the terrible pressure that was crushing free labour. The result of the decrease of free labour was general impoverishment. Slave labour, which has no other stimulus than fear of punishment, is neither hearty nor ingenious, it only seeks to spare itself; hence, wherever it prevails, the soil becomes sterile, not from want of hands, but of the motive to fruitful activity. From this cause the richest soil in the world became incapable of supporting even the population of Italy, which had to depend for sustenance on corn from Egypt, so that a storm at sea might bring a famine upon Rome. Men of the lower classes who were not slaves were often obliged either to sell themselves as slaves, or to work with slaves, and thus share in the opprobrium of the servile condition. If they escaped this hard necessity, it was only by choosing the miserable life of dependants on great families, hangers-on in the vestibules of rich mansions, earning their pittance by swelling the train of the insolent patrician. The greater part were found among the plebs whom the imperial munificence amused in the circus, after having

fed them with corn from Egypt.* Those who were still willing to work sought employment in the theatre, the circus, or in some of the trades connected with these places of resort, or in some paltry public calling, like that of the crier or apparitor. The pagan temples also employed a number of men, who filled various offices in connection with their worship. None of these occupations, however, were held in very good repute, and free labour was emphatically under a ban.

This had always been the case in the ancient world. It will be remembered that the position which Plato assigned to artisans in his Republic was so low, that he confounded them in fact with slaves. It would appear, from the tone he adopts, that citizens who occupy themselves with public affairs, and who are the guardians of the law, alone stand in need of virtue. There are occupations, according to Aristotle, in which a freeman could not engage without degrading himself. Such are those which demand especially physical energy, but nature creates for these employments a special class of men; these are those whom we keep in subjection, that they may labour in our stead, under the name of slaves, *or that of mercenaries.* † Intelligent youths are not to learn trades which require manual toil. "Who is he," said the great Socrates himself, "who rules the popular assembly? Is it the shoemaker? is it the public crier, or the *tentmaker?* If you think slightingly of each of these separately, why should you not despise them in the mass?" ‡ The discredit thus attaching to labour had been constantly

* Friedlander, "Mœurs Romaines," i. 275.
† Aristotle, "Polit." vii. 8. ‡ Xenophon, "Memorabilia," xii. 17.

growing. Claudius, when about to offer an expiatory sacrifice, required the workmen and the slaves to retire.* Lofty and generous spirits like Plutarch were at one on this point with bitter cynics like Lucian.† While to the latter the artisan is a vile being, meriting contempt by the simple fact of labouring with his hands, though he were a Phidias or a Praxiteles, the former does not hesitate to speak of manual labour in these terms: "We admire a rich purple dye, but we regard the dyer as a vile artisan."‡

We see then how the free labour of the poor shared in the opprobrium cast upon all the lower grades of society under the Empire. Christianity came to work another reform in this department, and to shake off the false shame which paralysed free labour. The working classes profited at least as much as the slaves by the great principles of human equality consecrated by the gospel and realised in the Church. There they stood on the same footing as the wealthiest descendants of a proud aristocracy, rose to the highest offices, and gained their patent of nobility by martyrdom. Origen takes up the cause of the fuller and of the smith no less than that of the slave.§ "The humblest Christian operative," says Tertullian, "knows more than Plato of the nature and perfections of God."‖ "You will find among us," "said Athenagoras, "ignorant men and artisans, who, if they would find it hard to define in words the advantages of our doctrine, demonstrate them plainly by deeds."¶ Surely the stigma attaching to

* Suetonius, "Claudius," i. 2. † Lucian, "Somnium," 9.
‡ Plutarch, "Pericles," 2. § Origen, "Contra Cels." iii. 35, 56.
‖ "Deum quilibet opifex Christianus et invenit et ostendit." Tertullian, "Apol." 46.
¶ Athenagoras, "Legatio." p. 12. Cologne edition, 1636.

manual labour must have been effectually removed by a religion whose Founder spent His youth in a carpenter's shop, and whose greatest apostle was a tent-maker, who was not ashamed to pause in the midst of the glorious labours of his mission, to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, that he might freely serve the poor? For a long period there was not supposed to be any incompatibility involved in holding office in the Church and at the same time carrying on a trade. Scruples on this point did not arise till the fourth century. Thus the same hands which blessed the eucharistic cup and the bread of the Communion were ready to handle the workman's tools. The stern interdiction by the Church of all trades connected with idolatry or with the theatre, purged manual labour from the vile tasks by which it was dishonoured in pagan life,* and thus freed from that which was unproductive and degrading, it fulfilled its true end. The Church prohibited with equal rigour the indolence which wasted long hours of the day on the steps of the circus. In order to guard the Christians against these gross pleasures, so delighted in by their fellow-citizens, it was found necessary to multiply exhortations to the regular labour of the workshop, dwelling on its true dignity in the sight of God, and thus rendering it easy. The bishop was bound to make every effort to procure work for the Christian artisan who was seeking it, and especially for the orphan who had lost his natural protectors.† In order to raise manual labour in the eyes of the Christians, they were taught to regard it as pro-

* "Const. Eccl. Egypt." ii. 41.

† Ὦ ἐπίσκοποι, μεριμνήσατε τεχνίτῃ ἔργον "Const. Apost." iv. 2.

curing them the means of almsgiving. "Practise liberality," we read in "Pastor Hermas," "and aid with the fruits of your labour the poor who come to you."*

It is not only to those to whom it is a necessity of maintenance that manual labour is recommended, but also to all pious women. Seeing the great lady diligent at her distaff, the humble Christian mother, whose children are dependent on her toil, will set herself with fresh heart to her daily task, and the artisan will feel it no shame to submit to the universal law of labour. Thus was inaugurated one of the most important reformations wrought by the new religion, and one the social consequences of which might amply refute the charge that Christianity made men useless as citizens.

* "Exerce bonitatem de fructu laborum tuorum." "Pastor," ii. Mund. 2.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIANITY IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE STATE AND WITH SOCIETY.

THE ancient idea of the State forms the basis of all pagan society. The rights of individuals are completely sacrificed to the interests of the community; the *res publica* is alone thought worthy of consideration. From this follow two consequences. The first, that the citizen alone has any legal rights; the mere fact of birth within the bounds of the city confers no claim, wife and children only share in the privileges of citizenship as the dependants of the father of the family who is a citizen. The stranger finds himself shut out of all civil rights. The second consequence of the principle we have stated is that the right of the citizen is itself limited, and must yield to the authority of the State, even in those matters of faith and opinion on which every man might claim an inalienable right to judge for himself. What is called liberty in classical antiquity is never what we now understand by the term: it is a collective sovereignty pressing with all its weight on the individual. This omnipotence of the State was, under the Republic at least, regulated by law, and shared between the political powers which balanced each other. From the commencement of the imperial era it was concentrated in

one individual, and swayed by his arbitrary and often lawless will. If the provinces at a distance from the centre of the Empire possessed a certain local independence, they owed it only to the fact that the reins of so vast a rule could not but hang somewhat loosely in the hands of the Cæsar; but wherever his authority made itself felt, it was absolute and overwhelming. The Roman State was the gigantic idol to which every individual claim must be sacrificed. Too often it was like a Moloch, greedy to devour, and the law of treason was made to supply the victims. Even when the power was in the hands of virtuous and moderate princes, the supremacy of public over private interests was rigidly maintained. On this point the Antonines held intact the pagan notion of the State.

"The aim of reasonable beings," says Marcus Aurelius, "is to conform to whatever is imposed by reason and the law of the most ancient and honourable city and government."* Every citizen is in his eyes a mere complement of the social system—the bee exists only for the sake of the hive.

The autocracy of the State was nowhere more oppressive than in the domain of religion, on which it had no right to intrude. Cicero did not hesitate to declare that the only gods whom the citizens were free to adore were those recognised by the State: *Deos publice adscitos*. It is true that the number of such gods was great, and every day augmenting; but so soon as a religion arose which could not accommodate itself to this promiscuous worship, the conflict broke out, and a determined opposition was for the first time offered to the civil power.

* Marcus Aurelius, "Thoughts," ii. 16.

We have traced the long and bloody strife between the Roman State and the Church. By the mere fact of refusing to yield in matters of conscience to the Roman law, the Christian introduced into the world an entirely new social principle, which was to become the foundation of civil liberty, by circumscribing the power of the State within its civil competence. Christianity was able to accomplish this great task because the means which it used were purely moral, and it never had recourse to armed resistance. If it had once taken the sword, it would have been only a new political power rising to replace the old, and opposing force to force in a sphere in which the conscience of the individual alone has a right to be heard. By dying for his faith, the martyr demonstrated its unconquerable energy as a moral motive, and showed the futility of force in face of conviction.

Christianity was not satisfied with meeting the encroachments of the State with a simple *non possumus*. We have seen how it grasped in theory and realised in practice in the domestic life the grand idea of the oneness of mankind. The man was in its view greater than the citizen; the claims of humanity were above those of the State. It taught that man, as a moral being to whom God had given both duties and rights, might never abandon this sacred trust; and thus the liberty of the individual, hitherto unrecognised, became sacred. In every man, whatever the accidents of his outward position and civic standing, there is the same moral individuality, which in God's sight is a precious thing, since by it the man may become one with Himself. He cannot therefore be treated as a mere wheel

in a machine, part of an inorganic whole, valueless except as connected with the rest: he has a destiny of his own to fulfil, and his moral freedom may not be confiscated. The rights of individuals are for the first time placed above the interference of the State. In vindicating these rights for himself, the Christian claims them no less for all his brother men, of whatever race or rank, for the artificial distinctions conferred by relation to the State are merged in the broad claims of humanity. It is indeed the true mission of the State to harmonise more and more perfectly natural and civic rights, so that the former may be upheld and protected by the latter. Truths like these, which were recognised by the great lawyers and thinkers of the Empire, form the very basis of the Christian idea of the relations of men to each other, and they receive their application wherever the gospel is accepted as the rule of life. Thus in the humble obscurity of Christian homes is commenced and carried on the great transformation of the idea of the State, the principle of which was clearly grasped in the early dawn of Christianity, though its realisation was impeded for ages by the union between the Church and the Empire.

The new religion did not rest content with the implied acceptance of these new ideas of society: it expounded them with perfect clearness. It was rather in danger of being carried at once to the opposite extreme of the ancient notion of the State, and of asserting the absolute independence of the individual at the expense of all social bonds. It cannot be denied that there were sects characterised by a morbid fanaticism, to which the Roman empire appeared altogether the work of the

evil one. Watching from day to day for the return of Christ in the clouds, these Christian devotees confounded all the institutions of the past in the same indiscriminate condemnation, and earnestly desired the destruction of the State. Montanism in its ecstatic rhapsodies heard all the trumpets of the last judgment, and loved to anticipate the horror and the crash of doom. But all this was directly opposed to the true teaching of the Church and to its prevailing tone of thought: its most faithful organs did not so belie the wisdom of its first apostles, who even under a Nero proved themselves capable of distinguishing between the hideous distortion of the civil power and its true idea and principle, and spoke of the State as a Divine institution. In proof of this they made it a duty to pray for the emperor in all their assemblies for worship.* Thus they gave most solemn recognition to the civil power as ordained of God. They ascribe its origin not to the son of Saturn, the Jupiter of mythology, but to the Creator of all things. Hence, far from refusing due obedience, and acting the part of rebels, they are the most loyal subjects of the State. "Cæsar is more to us than to you pagans," exclaims Tertullian, "for he is placed on the throne by our God."† That which thus exalts the dignity of the State is at the same time that which limits its power, for as it is appointed by God it forfeits its claim when it fails to fulfil its end. If the prince makes use of his authority, not to uphold justice, but to gratify evil passions, he becomes a tyrant, and consequently places himself in opposition to the very idea

* Tertullian, "Apol." c. 32.

† "Et merito dixerim: Noster est magis Cæsar ut a nostro Deo constitutus." Ibid. 33.

of the State as instituted by God.* Most of all does the civil power betray its trust and belie its design when it seeks to make the religious conscience bend to its laws. Obedience is to be rendered to every just demand of the State, but when that which it requires cannot be yielded without injustice or apostasy from the faith, resistance, or rather the refusal to obey, becomes a duty. The civil law is to be observed when it is in harmony with the moral law, but when these two come into collision, the former is always to be preferred to the latter; and the Christian is bound, as Origen has powerfully said, to despise the will of the human legislator, and give obedience only to the Divine.† It is clearly understood, however, that resistance is to be simply moral, and is never to take up the weapons of human warfare. "Our kingdom," say the Christians, "is not an earthly kingdom. We seek only the kingdom of God."‡ These words of Justin Martyr, sealed with torrents of blood, sufficed to wrest from the ancient State the dominion of soul and conscience, and to establish the private rights of individuals. "Every man," says Tertullian, "receives from the law of nature liberty to worship that which seems good to him. What has another man to do with my religion?"§ From this principle follows the neutrality of the State in religious matters; it has no authority in questions of conscience, and the work it is appointed by God to do forbids its intermeddling with them. It is a lay

* Origen, "Contra Cels." viii. 68. † Ibid. v. 37.
‡ Justin, "Apol." ii. 38.
§ "Humani juris et naturalis potestatis est unicuique, quod putaverit, colere." Tertullian, "Ad. Scapul." 2.

government just because it is not atheistic. Christian thought rose at once to the loftiest conception of the modern State. The Christians proved that they acknowledged the competence and the right of the State, by consenting to plead their cause before it. Every apology opens with an act of submission to the powers that be, from whom an equitable judgment is desired: the true character of the authority is thus clearly recognised. In short, Christianity never sought to place itself beyond the pale of the law, and to break with civil society, as if it constituted a brotherhood of latter-day saints, shaking off the dust of their feet against an accursed world. When accused of withdrawing from common life, and being useless to the Empire, the Christian protested vigorously. His prayers alone were the surest palladium of his country.*

In principle, at least in its most moderate school, the Church allowed its members to fulfil all their duties as citizens, and placed no hindrance in the way of their holding offices. "It is lawful," says Clement of Alexandria, "to take a part in public affairs; nor is there any prohibition on attending to the things of this world, provided all be done honestly, and that in buying and selling there be but one price." † Trade is legitimate, on condition that no oaths be taken with a view to deceive. It must be admitted, nevertheless, that in practice this large liberty granted to Christians to take part in common life met with many obstacles. It was very difficult to fulfil any public office without coming in contact with some of the rites of the general

* Origen, "Contra Cels." viii. 73.
† Πολιτεύσασθαι ἔξὸν. Clement, "Pædag." iii. 11, 78.

idolatry, or, at least, being obliged to adopt some of its formulas. Thus this definition of the duties of the citizen and the public man was more important for the future than for the present; it could only come into full operation in a new state of society, when the ordinary duties of life should have been dissociated from the worship of false gods. It was this condition of things which made the ascetic party in the Church prevail over the broader and more human section; its error was that it gave the sanction of permanent principles to practices which were only necessitated by the difficulties of a state of society still pagan. It was very difficult for the man who had risen to the higher grade of the social hierarchy to continue true to his faith. The constitution of the Church of Egypt excludes even from the place of catechumen any one who has the power of the sword, or who wears the purple of a ruler of the city.*

Such offices under a Pagan government appeared incompatible with a Christian profession; but this prohibition was of course only temporary, and incident to a transitory condition of things. As early as the close of the third century there were Christians holding important offices in the court of Diocletian, but these had no security for their lives in any outbreak of persecution for the faith.† The Church found the greatest difficulty in dealing with cases of military service. It is well known how intimately this was associated with the national religion. The altar of sacrifice was ever smoking in the camp; every important military movement

* Ὁ μαχαίρας ἐξουσίαν ἔχων ἢ πόλεως ἄρχων πορφύρᾳ ἀμφιεννύμενος παυσάστω ἢ ἀποβαλλέσθω. "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 41.

† Eusebius, "H. E." viii. 2.

was inaugurated by religious rites; the legion worshipped its eagles as its tutelary gods. The religion of the Prince of peace, moreover, could lend no sanction to wars not purely defensive. The spirit of conquest was in flagrant opposition to the gospel teachings of the sacredness of human life. "Is not Christ among the barbarians also?" exclaims Tertullian.* "What is represented by the laurels of the conqueror's crown but the tears of mothers and orphans? And shall the son of peace, to whom all contention is forbidden, march to battle, drag captives to prison, and use the instruments of torture, when he is taught not to avenge even offences offered to himself? Shall he be seen standing sentinel in the temples which he has abandoned, leaning on the spear which pierced the side of Christ? Shall he bear another banner than that of Christ?" † If the stern law of necessity is pleaded in reply, the ardent Christian answers that neither for himself nor others does he acknowledge any such rule.

Neither the discipline of the Church nor the precepts of the gospel, however, went so far as thus totally to condemn military service; but it is obvious that, tainted as it was under the Roman Empire with cruelty and idolatry, Christianity could not look favourably upon it. Origen wished, indeed, that Christians might be contented to serve the State by forming a praying host, instead of being compelled to go into camp life.‡ The Church, animated by the same sentiment, did not go so far as to interdict military service as a sin, but it only sanctioned it in cases of compulsion. This appears

* "Et apud Barbaros enim Christus." Tertullian, "De coron." 12.
† Ibid. 11. ‡ Origen, "Contra Cels." viii. 73.

from a rule in the constitution of the Egyptian Church. "The catechmuen or believer who chooses to be a soldier shall be cut off.* One who has been enlisted without his own free will does not fall under the same condemnation; he is only enjoined to respect human life as far as possible. Let the soldier who is under command never voluntarily kill a man, and if he is ordered to do so let him not obey with haste. If he takes life without being compelled to do it, let him be excluded."†

In order to apprehend the bearing of these disciplinary measures, it must be remembered that under the Empire military service was not, as formerly, obligatory. The Italians were exempted, and in the provinces there was no personal conscription, and freedom from service could be secured by finding a number of recruits proportionate to the means. It was, therefore, perfectly easy to avoid serving. Subsequently the emperors contented themselves with a payment in money, which enabled them to hire mercenary soldiers.‡ By choosing the calling of a soldier, a Christian exposed himself to all the temptations of camp life, and showed a disposition altogether opposed to the spirit of his religion.

The Church, in condemning those who chose the career of arms, while at the same time not condemning those who had been forced to enrol themselves, but only enjoining them to abstain from all violence and rapine, showed as much wisdom as moderation. Christianity has ever been the foe of all wars of conquest, though

* Κατηχούμενος ἢ πιστὸς στρατιῶται εἶναι ἐπιθυμοῦντες ἀποβαλλέσθωσαν. "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 41.

† Στρατιώτης ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ ὢν ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἀποκτεινέτω, ἐὰν δὲ κελευσθῇ, μὴ σπευδέτω μοιεῖν· μὴ πειθόμενος δὲ ἀποβαλλέσθω. Ibid. ii. 14.

‡ See Duruy, "Histoire des Romains," v. 284.

it relaxed in later times the severe restrictions which were necessary under a pagan rule. When in after days the Church came to regard an armed force as the sword of the State, stretched out not only to guard the soil of the fatherland but to protect the right, it no longer looked upon military service as an inferior and well-nigh sinful calling; though the spirit of conquest has unhappily too often manifested itself in all its rapacity and iniquity, even in the midst of modern civilisation. It is nevertheless true that the principles which form the glory of that civilisation were proclaimed, and so far as possible practised, by the Christians of the first ages. The true relation between Christians and the State is expressed in Tertullian's words: "In order to render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, and to God that which is God's, we must give to the emperor the money which bears his effigy, and to God, man himself, made in His image."

CHAPTER V.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL LIFE—THE THEATRE—ART.

§ 1.—*The Theatre.*

If the idolatry which permeated the whole of pagan society rendered it difficult for the Christians to discharge their civic duties, it still more deeply tainted the popular recreations under the Empire. In the sphere of æsthetics, as in every other, the new religion proved itself creative and inventive, but it needed first to make free use of the axe and pruning-knife in the enchanted forest of ancient art, and to cut away unsparingly all the poisonous parasitic vegetation which, like the brilliant flora of some marshy lands, exhaled only fever and death. There was especially one form of artistic representation, and that which exercised the widest fascination in pagan society, with which Christianity could make no compromise.

The theatre, and all more or less closely connected with it, had become a grand school of corruption and of wrong: it was the fruitful centre of every sort of sin.* A vast distance separated it from the glorious school of Æschylus and Sophocles, which at Athens had graven in marble, pure as that sculptured by Phidias, the noblest ideal, and had consecrated in immortal verse

* Friedländer, "Mœurs Romaines," vol. ii. book 6.

the great oracles of conscience. The Greek Melpomene, who alighted from the chariot of Thespis, had been a true priestess of the country and a prophetess of the moral law. Undoubtedly, even at that period, the comic muse had shamelessly outraged public decency by language which was a blot on its graphic pictures of human nature, and on the sweet music of the "Birds" and the "Clouds." At Rome the theatre never rose to the height of the great Athenian art: its tendency under the Empire was constantly downwards. The solemn imitations of the tragic Seneca had pleased only the lovers of declamation. Plautus, and still more Terence, demanded some effort of mind to follow their carefully elaborated pieces, in which there was a studied unity of plot and fitness of form. The popular taste affected more and more the coarse and violent representations of the circus. The theatre, properly speaking, only pleased the spectators by pantomimes, or by grand ballets, in which were enacted the loves of Jupiter, and in which Venus appeared as a very Phryne. Success was the reward of vileness. Apuleius, who has given us a very fascinating analysis of a pantomime of the Judgment of Paris, shows in his "Metamorphoses" to what a length had gone both the degradation of the public taste and the tolerance of the civil authorities. In a time when public life in the forum had ceased, great assemblies of men were drawn together only by the spectacles. The surest way for a man to gain favour in his native town was by multiplying representations in the theatre, and the lowest tastes of the populace must be gratified, or the most lavish expenditure would not ensure success. Even volup-

tuous pantomimes soon lost their charm, and blood must be drawn to tickle the taste of this *blasé* generation, which had witnessed such sudden changes of fortune in the political tragedies of its day.

The racecourse — where the athletic sports bore some resemblance to the Olympic games, that had done so much to develop that manly beauty which was the glory of the Greeks — never met with more than moderate success in Rome. The old republican severity of manners left a lingering repugnance for these combats of nude men; and in later times this pleasure seemed tame in comparison with the more perilous conflicts for which the craving had been aroused. Nero, who affected to imitate Greece, only succeeded in creating by command a fictitious enthusiasm for musical entertainments. When it ceased to be dangerous to life and limb not to applaud the imperial artist, no more interest was shown in this sort of amusement. It was not possible often to enliven its monotony by the conflagration of half the city and the carrying about of living men as torches. The chariot races met with a far greater success, and excited the passions as strongly as the closest political struggles. Factions were formed around each famous whip, and the whites and the greens troubled the capital of the world with their rivalries as much as Cæsar and Pompey had ever done.

But the spectacle which surpassed all others in attraction was the circus, where human blood flowed in torrents. There was no town, small or great, where these cruel spectacles were not given, but at Rome they reached their climax of horror. The emperors favoured them, as a powerful diversion to the instincts

of revolt which might be lurking among the dense masses of their capital. That deep saying of an actor to Augustus, "It is as needful to thee as to us that the people should be taken up with us," was an epitome of the policy of all despotic governments. The sums which the emperors devoted to the games of the circus were incalculable. The Coliseum, the colossal circus, as its name indicates, would hold nearly 400,000. Fifteen hundred pairs of gladiators could be seen wrestling at once. Sometimes, instead of the combats between men, maritime battles were enacted upon a sea suddenly poured upon the scene from vast reservoirs. The wild beasts brought from Africa only awaited the opening of their cages to rush upon the victims. The gladiators formed a great army. With the exception of the *retiarii*, who had only a net with which to enclose their enemy and a spear to pierce him, they were clad in brilliant armour. They were received with acclamation as heroes; but if they fell, the spectators rarely made the saving sign which would have spared them the final blow, though sometimes in the dying face might be read that look of proud and hopeless sorrow which lives again in immortal marble, and which a writer of our day has described in such pathetic words. There were, doubtless, many volunteers among the gladiators, men of ardent temperament and fierce courage, to whom it was pleasure to risk their lives in the fond hope of a victory to be largely recompensed. But the greater number were unhappy slaves, doomed to this butchery by their masters, who would make gain and glory out of their blood. We find Marcus Aurelius, indeed, prohibiting the sale of slaves for the purposes of

the circus, but he did not forbid masters to take there their own slaves, and he himself was obliged to tolerate these sanguinary representations.

By an odious profanation of justice, men condemned to death were made to pander to the public amusement in the execution of their sentence. War was also a grand purveyor for the circus: prisoners taken in battle were made to perform there for the gratification of their captors. We can conceive the bitter anguish of those among them who could not forget their dignity as men or their homes and families: they often chose to die rather than to submit to such ignominy. It is said that the high-souled Britons performed the melancholy task of killing one another, that they might not be exposed to the shameful death that awaited them. Never did the pagan world show a more insolent contempt for the rights of humanity and the dignity of moral beings, than when it thus constrained thousands of men to become at once the instruments and the victims of its sanguinary pleasures. Cicero himself, in spite of his sublime words about the love of the human race, congratulated his friend Atticus on having provided many pairs of gladiators. Seneca alone spoke with indignation against the circus, but it was a vain protest; and Antonines like Trajan continued to pander to the morbid appetites of an enervated people, who seemed only to live themselves as they saw others suffer and die.

Every taste found gratification in the circus. Distributions of meat and game were made by order of the emperor. Syrian women there performed their wanton dances. The circus itself, with its spectators, many of them sumptuously arrayed, its architectural splendour,

and the grand *coup d'œil* of an assembly of several hundred thousands, was the marvel of the age. Every writer of the time speaks of the attraction it exercised over the Romans of the Decline. As they sat upon the steps of the theatre beneath a burning sun, breathing a moral atmosphere of feverish excitement, watching in security the vicissitudes of a real battle, gloating over the sufferings of the wretches whose blood crimsoned the arena, delighting in their death, as Tacitus has said; then witnessing the all too vivid representation of some scene of adultery, sheltered under the name of an Olympian god, and performed to the rhythm of melodious music; while the Numidian lion was roaring in his cage, impatient to devour his prey waiting in the condemned cell;—as thus they sported with death, the people became themselves the most cruel of wild beasts, and never did African desert resound with a more terrible roar than that in which many a delicate Roman lady joined, as it rose in the circus: "The Christian to the lions."*

Between abominations like these and the Church no compromise was possible, not only because her own confessors were among the victims in the arena, and because every representation was inaugurated by pagan rites, but because everything that was there done was an outrage on God and humanity, and a deadly poison to the soul. And yet the attraction of these pleasures was so great, so general, that repeated prohibitions and precautions were necessary to guard weak and wavering Christians against them. We know that some among them attempted a feeble apology for the theatre,

* "Quotidiani in nos leones postulantur." Tertull. "De Spect." 27.

making distinctions undoubtedly, and rejecting that which was grossly wrong, but pleading extenuating circumstances for those amusements which were of a merely questionable character. They were not willing, in truth, to forego their favourite pleasure, and the fear of losing it had perhaps more power over them than the fear of death.* They showed a strange facility in excusing themselves; their apologies, derived in part from the pagans, are like the first essay of a subtle casuistry to stifle the spirit under the letter. They say, "Does not the word racecourse appear with honour on the page of Scripture, which has borrowed from it one of its most beautiful images of the Christian life? † Can a single text be quoted which distinctly forbids the theatre? ‡ That which is not forbidden is tacitly allowed. Is not God Himself, who makes His sun to shine on the whole earth, a witness of all that is done? Why should we shut our eyes to that which He beholds from the height of heaven? After all, is not everything which is used in theatrical representations, from the stones of the building to the dresses of the actors and the swords of the gladiators—is it not all of God's creating? Beside, all is not vicious and evil in the theatre. § Virtue and courage there receive their reward. There is then no reason to forbid the theatre, if only it be not abused. That which delights man does not offend God." ‖

Tertullian, in refuting these sophisms, only expresses the general opinion of the Church. He does not dwell

* "Plures invenias quos magis periculum voluptatis, quam vitæ, avocet ab hac secta." Tertullian, "De spect." 2.
† Ibid. 18. ‡ Ibid. 20. § Ibid. 27.
‖ "Nec Deum offendi oblectatione hominis." Ibid. 1.

long on the miserable quibble based on the origin of the materials used in the building and decorations of the theatre. As well might it be pretended that the idol deserves respect because the wood of which it is made was cut out of the forest; or that the assassin is innocent because the blade with which he does the murderous deed is made of iron drawn out of the earth. If evil is justified by any admixture of good, then we may drink with safety the most deadly poisons, for they often have a pleasant taste.* If all that is done beneath the eye of God may be lawfully looked upon, then there is no condemnation for any crime or debauch, since all these are naked and open to His eye. What matters it that the Scripture has not distinctly said, "Thou shalt not go to the circus," if it has said, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill"?† Is not idolatry the presiding genius of all the games of the circus?‡ Murder and adultery strive for the pre-eminence in the theatre. How should that which would be considered culpable in private life become inoffensive on the steps of the amphitheatre? Let us shake off all scruples if unpiety and cruelty are permissible. § Can anything be more abominable than to rejoice in the sufferings of the innocent? And the gladiators are such victims, doomed to suffer for the amusement of the populace, not as the meed of any crime they have committed. A homicide is condemned, and yet there is no hesitation in urging on the unwilling

* Tertullian, "De spect." 27. † Ibid. 4. ‡ Ibid 5.
§ "Si sævitiam, si impietatem, si feritatem permissam nobis contendere possumus, eamus in amphitheatrum." Ibid. 19.

gladiator by the lash to a murderous conflict, while eager spectators gloat over the death-agonies of the fallen. If all impurity is proscribed, how can it be lawful to hear language which it would not be lawful to utter,* and to witness the open desecration of all morality?† No time or place can lend sanction to that which God condemns; that which is inherently good or evil cannot change its character.‡ Nor can it be pleasing to God to see men clothing themselves in ridiculous disguises, and making a travesty of the nature which is His work. The pagans themselves show the true estimate of the theatre by excluding actors from all civic honours. For us Christians, it should be enough to remember our baptismal vow, in which we renounced all idols and all the pomps of the world and the devil,§ for the theatre is the very throne and temple of the devil.‖ In it God and man are alike treated with contumely. The maskings and gross buffooneries of the stage are an insult at once to the dignity of man, and to Him whose image man bears.¶ In the name of humanity, therefore, as well as of God, Christianity sets itself against the impure and cruel games of the ancient theatre.

Tertullian asks finally if piety must not perish in such a place. The disciple of Christ cannot breathe in an atmosphere thus heavy with blasphemy and impurity. It can ill become hands which have been folded in prayer to be joining in the rapturous applause that

* Tertullian, "De spect." 17.
† "Cur liceat audire quæ loqui non licet." Ibid. 17.
‡ Ibid. 16. § Ibid. 4. ‖ "Dæmoniorum officia." Ibid. 9.
¶ "Quæro, ac Deo placeat, qui omnem similitudinem vetat fieri, quanto magis imaginis suæ." Ibid. 23.

greets a jockey or an actor; or lips which have learnt the praises of God, to be urging on the gladiator with eager cries to the dance of death.* What Christian virtue would not flee such a scene? Peace of soul shuns the idle tumult; modesty shuts its eyes against such infamous sights; humility can find no pleasure in a place where all are seeking only to see and to be seen.† Nothing can bring God to mind in a scene where nothing speaks of God. In fact, the grand charm of the theatre is just this—that it makes a man lose himself, and it is thus in very truth a possession.‡

The Church was at one with Tertullian on this point of morality. Minutius Felix is no less severe on the subject. He looks upon the theatre as the school of homicide and debauch, encouraging vice by making a sport of it.§ Tatian, in his discourses to the Greeks, stigmatises strongly the methods by which the circus is sustained. He shows the rich man purchasing the poor for gold, in order to make him a hired assassin, thus offering a true feast of Thyestes to the crowd of spectators, who, greedy of carnage, feed upon the mangled limbs and heaped-up corpses of those who have been slain for their amusement. ||

The Church, not content with protesting against the theatre, excluded from the class of catechumens not only all actors, but every one occupied in any way, directly or indirectly, in connection with theatrical

* "Illas manus quas ad Dominum extuleris, postmodum laudando histrionem fatigare." Tertullian, "De spect." 25.

† "Nemo in spectaculo ineundo prius cogitat, nisi videri et videre." Ibid. 25.

‡ "Sui non sunt." Ibid. 16.

§ "In gladiatoriis homicidii disciplinam,—histrio amorem dum fingit, infligit." "Octav." 37.

|| Tatian, "Contra Græcos," p. 161. Cologne edition.

performances.* The driver of the racing chariot and the gladiator were equally excluded. This preliminary excommunication is the more significant, because it applies not only to the Eucharist, but to the preparatory stage of the catechumenate. As an instance showing how deeply the Christian conscience was stirred in relation to the theatre, we may mention the case of an unhappy woman, of whom Tertullian speaks, who, having yielded to the temptation to go to the circus, returned from it deranged, imagining herself to be the prey of demons, so horrified had she been at the spectacle into which she had allowed herself to be drawn.†

The opposition of Christianity to the theatre does not rest upon any rude hostility to art. It could not be expected, engaged as it was in the vast labour of evangelising the pagan world, to devote much attention to matters purely æsthetic. It had no leisure to train artists while it was moulding martyrs and saints. But it did bring a renovating influence to bear upon art at the very time when it was perishing in a sterile abundance of innumerable works. The art of this period carried within itself the germs of a fatal decay. It had lost all true inspiration; it had no longer any ideal. The human form had ceased to represent to it the moral grandeur and quiet majesty which had characterised Greek tragedy and sculpture in the age of Pericles, when Greece reached its highest conception of the Divine in human form. The beliefs which had called forth this ideal had died away, and mythology

* "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 41.

† "Exemplum accidit mulieris quæ theatrum adiit, et inde cum dæmonio rediit." Tertullian, "De spect." 26.

had degenerated, as we have seen, into a collection of amorous legends. If religion had a more serious side, it borrowed it from the creeds of other countries, especially those of the East. Art thus lost its classical character, that precision of form closely allied to the Greek humanism, which would not permit the Divine to be lost in a colossal pantheism. Finally, in the decline of public life, art was no longer devoted to the expression of the high sentiments of humanity, to the beautification of the religion of the country; it became the handmaid of the magnates of the day, beginning with the emperor, whose palaces it sumptuously adorned, and whose image it constantly reproduced. Its special function then became that of decorating the mansions of the rich with the costly materials lavishly placed at its disposal; men were no longer content with the marble out of which had sprung the great gods of the past. The skill of hand displayed was marvellous; the most perfect models still existed, and the mere execution left nothing to be desired; but the soul of art was departing day by day. Only a moral revolution could bring it back, and Christianity alone was capable of effecting this. It did more than merely prepare the way for it by its influence and by the pure ideal which it raised in an age of proscription, when the use of any striking symbols of its own would have drawn down denunciation and death: it developed also æsthetic ideas full of originality, which became subsequently the inspiration of glorious artists.

There were, no doubt, intolerant iconoclasts who, confounding the use with the abuse, condemned without distinction all the culture of the ancient world, even its noble

literature. Traces of this sweeping censure are found in the "Apostolical Constitutions," * but such narrowness was not general. The Christian apology was indeed bound to seek in the ancient literature the partial confirmation of its own doctrines, and it did not hesitate to appeal, like St. Paul himself, to the testimony of the poets. In the conflict with Gnosticism which identified created nature with evil, and held it accursed, as the work of the blind demiurgus, the Church was called to dwell on the beauty of creation, regarding it as a manifestation of the higher and Divine world, and as a living symbol of its glory. The sun sinking into the bosom of the ocean at night, and rising in renewed splendour in the morning, appeared to her a striking image of the Resurrection.† Nothing dies in this world, except to live again. The whole order of nature bears witness to this grand restoration. God revealed Himself in His works before He spoke in His oracles, and nature is a prophetess.‡ She forms one sublime symphony, of which the Word is the choragus.§ It is not even necessary to rise to the sublimities of earth and of the starry skies in order to perceive the beauty of nature; it is enough to gather a flower, to breathe the perfume of a rose.‖ But most of all upon the human form divine is set the seal of God. The clay has been moulded by a Phidias such as Greece never knew, and the soul is enshrined within it as a precious pearl.¶ The masterpiece of creation is that

* Τῶν ἐθνικῶν βιβλίων πάντων ἀπέχου. "Const. Apost." i. 6.
† Tertullian, "De resurrect." c. 12. ‡ Ibid.
§ Clement, "Protrept. i. 5.
‖ "Rosam si tibi obtulero non fastidies creatorem." Tertullian, "Cont. Marc." i. 14.
¶ "Phidias tantus, Deus vivus." Ibid. "De resurrect." 6.

human frame in which the Word was to dwell, and which was not only the work of God, but in a manner the pledge of the Incarnation.* God Himself is the supreme Artist who breathes spirit into the human form to render it immortal.

A long period was required for Christian art to win its way in a world given up to idolatry. Before the ideal of true beauty could be recognised, it was needful to dethrone the false, perfidious, dangerous type of beauty which was the Circe of the pagan world. The great representative spirits of the Church were with reason implacable towards that corrupt art which debased the soul while it fascinated the senses.† They condemned unsparingly everything that could poison the moral life, though it were presented with all the charms of Homeric verse.‡ "O beauty, mother of adultery," exclaims Clement of Alexandria, as he gazes on the ensnaring charms by which men are lured into perdition.§ Clement is no despiser of beauty in itself; nay, he even consented to admire that which was truly beautiful in the masterpieces of ancient art, in so far as they could be regarded apart from their idolatrous intention.‖ That which he desires above all is to preserve the bloom of true beauty by guarding it from all surrounding defilement: this gift of heaven is kept by purity alone. "O man," he says, "be not the tyrant of beauty, doing it violence; be content to be its king."¶ Is not the human form the sacred image of that supreme beauty of which

* "Non tantum Dei opus sed pignus." Tertullian, "De resurrect." 6.
† Clement, "Protrept." iv. 57. ‡ Ibid. "Pædag." iii. 2, 14.
§ Ὦ κάλλους μοιχικοῦ. Ibid. iii. 2, 13.
‖ Ἐπαιτείσθω μὲν ἡ τέχνη, μὴ ἀπατάτω δὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπον. Ibid. "Protrept." iv. 57.
¶ Μὴ τυραννήσῃς τοῦ καλλοῦς! Ibid. iv. 49.

all other beauty is but a reflection?* It is this reflection which we want to see glorifying the human form; therefore we say, Cast away all those adornments beneath which it is as it were buried. The idea is not to destroy natural beauty—the impress of God Himself—but to enhance it by returning to the simplicity of nature, and this, therefore, is the first principle of Christian æsthetics. This natural beauty, preserved by temperance, acquires a new and higher grace when it becomes the revealer of the inner beauty of the soul. Moral aberrations always betray themselves in time in the countenance, and the lower animal nature becomes predominant; while the man who lives in constant fellowship with God shares in His beauty, and becomes Himself godlike.†

Love is the supreme beauty.‡ It was this which transfigured and glorified the face of Christ; and it was this beauty of expression rather than the calm cold grandeur of Greek models which characterised Christian art. This new conception of beauty brought a purifying and softening influence to bear on that Platonic school which had done so much to promote the worship of the ideal, and had given such large development to the notion of the beautiful. It would be unreasonable to expect that the Church of the martyrs should originate many works of art: hers was a sterner calling. But we have ample evidence that the Christians did not share in that invincible repugnance to the

* Τότε προσκυνήσω τὸ κάλλος τὸ ἀληθινὸν, ὃ ἀρχέτυπον ἐστι τῶν καῶν. Clement, "Protrept." iv. 49.

† Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος, ᾧ σύνοικος ὁ λόγος, μορφὴν ἔχει τοῦ λόγου, ἐξομοιοῦται τῷ Θεῷ. κάλλος ἐστὶ τὸ ἀληθινόν, καὶ γὰρ Θεὸς ἐστίν, Θεὸς δὲ ἐκεῖνος ὁ ἄνθρωπος γίνεται. Ibid. "Pædag." iii. 1, 2.

‡ Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλο κάλλος ἀνθρώπων ἀγάπη. Ibid. § 3.

plastic arts and reproductions of the human form which was felt by the Jews. We have already learnt from Clement that they delighted to engrave pious symbols upon the modest jewels they possessed; and we shall see presently how freely they used in the catacombs the processes of ancient art in the service of the faith, while abjuring all that was essentially pagan.*

The same rules were observed by the Church in regard to literature.† The study of it was not prohibited, but the Christians were warned against its possibly pernicious influence. The Church showed much more severity in the case of those who wished to become teachers, and not simply students of the ancient literature, because it would appear peculiarly difficult to preserve a strict fidelity to the monotheism of the gospel while commenting on the poets of paganism.‡ The idea of cultivating literature as an art never seems to have occurred to a writer of the early ages: he looked upon himself as a witness and a soldier of Christ, and a merely literary career would have seemed to him incompatible with his high vocation. It was this very contempt for art which gave such an entirely new character to the Christian epistles. Productions of this class among pagan writers always degenerated into rhetorical dissertations: they were nerveless and cold because they had no great cause to serve, no manly argument to plead. A sincere passion is the true coal of fire with which human lips must be touched before they can utter

* Tertullian, "De idolatr." 3.

† See "Geschichte der Christlich. lateinischen litteratur von ihrem Anfangen." By Adolf Ebert. Leipzig, 1873. P. 93.

‡ "Fideles magis discere quam docere literas capit." Tertullian, "De idolatr." 10.

strong, earnest, unaffected words. But these frozen, subtle rhetors only played with brilliant words, as jugglers with their glittering balls. The religion of Christ, on the contrary, which called on its followers to gird their loins for a mighty conflict, taught them to speak in brief and burning words. Christian eloquence, rude and incorrect as it often was, had a glory of its own in its pointed directness and manly vigour. The great apostles of the second century inaugurated a new style of eloquence, which dealt with the highest truths, and pleaded for the most sacred rights with a noble disinterestedness and a lofty indifference to the favour of the world. They did not always show an entire disregard of form. The "Octavius" of Minutius Felix is a dialogue on the antique model; Cyprian and Lactantius remind us of Cicero. A striking originality characterises the writings of Tertullian, abrupt as they are in language and lurid in their imaginative colouring, as he appears now as the tribune of Christian liberties, now as the inspired poet, dramatising in burning words the thoughts and images that passed before him as in apocalyptic vision. Without the slightest attempt at artistic effect, none probably ever exercised a greater influence over the Christian mind, thrilling it with terror and touching it to tears.

The Greek Fathers speak with more simplicity and purity, but they also use the poetical element in their allegorical exposition of Scripture, in which their danger is over-subtlety. The interpretation of the Song of Songs by Origen, who treats it as the betrothal hymn of the soul of man to its Divine Spouse, is entirely poetical. The "Pastor Hermas," while so rigid in its original

idea, deserves to be regarded as in many respects a work of imagination, from the often graceful descriptions interwoven with its allegories. However valueless the apocryphal literature may be in point of doctrine, it reveals to us in the lower strata of Christian society a certain vein of poetry. The "Acts of Pilate" describe with a pathos not devoid of art the descent of Christ into Hades. His meeting with old Adam, now at length released, and with the great prophets who had long desired to see that day, is pourtrayed with power and pathos. The "Testament of Moses" depicts in noble touches the death of the first man, the grief of Eve, and the trembling of the earth, which shrinks from receiving the corpse of the son of heaven. These anonymous works disclose the secret silent travail of the Christian imagination, to which only the plastic power was wanting for the creation of a new school of poetry. The sorrowful and sublime conception of Gnosticism, which makes the *Sophia* wailing on the threshold of the infinite, the personification or angel of the earth consumed by an infinite regret for the heaven it has lost, was formed under the same influences. The Apocalypse of Commodian, and the poem of the Phœnix by an unknown author, vainly attempted to conform their incorrect language to the recognised rules of poetry, but these works are of far less value than the informal and natural productions of the popular imagination.

Commodian's Apocalypse reminds us of the gloomy predictions of the Jewish Sibyl, and only strikes the well-worn chord of righteous anger, which is not the true tone of the Christian lyre. The only musical compositions which the Church had as yet produced were

songs of praise to be used in worship. Its chief work hitherto had been to wake to new tones of gladness the harp of the human heart. From this, in later ages, will be poured forth streams of melody that will enrich all language with new forms of speech expressive of its own ideal. For the present that ideal is itself being silently formed and purified day by day. In the quiet and obscurity of private life, types of character are being matured such as the ancient world never knew—such types as that of the Christian woman, in whom the masters of the Renaissance will presently personify the gentlest and most divine of gospel virtues. The drama of the moral life goes on deepening in interest, and only awaits the immortal artists who shall reproduce it, and thus give birth to a literature more rich and varied than any antiquity can offer. The mine is opened, it is only waiting to be worked.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIANITY AND ASCETICISM.

ASCETICISM, while it does honour to human nature by showing its supremacy over its lower instincts, is nevertheless a great moral mistake. It must be carefully distinguished from the austerity which keeps the body in subjection, and exercises over it a stern discipline without attempting to destroy it. Asceticism goes far beyond this: it regards the corporeal element as more or less evil in itself, and family life as an inferior condition, incompatible with the perfection of Christian character. When Christianity appeared, asceticism reigned through the whole East, and in India it had assumed gigantic proportions in the religion of Buddha, which identified evil not only with the corporeal element, but with the created and the finite, so that its aspiration was to merge all individual life in the vast abyss of being. Wherever dualism prevailed, asceticism triumphed, at least, in the nobler souls, who, when the great duality of flesh and spirit was presented to them, espoused the higher life. The religion most directly opposed to asceticism was Judaism, which, being based upon the doctrine of the creation, had always presented spiritual blessings through the medium of those which were temporal. Neither the priests nor the prophets of Judaism were

separated from the common life of the people. To fear God and keep His commandments; to cherish the wife of his youth, and to see his home filled with children, who should be like the arrows in a quiver against his enemies; to meditate on the sacred Book under his own vine and fig tree, blessing God for the abundance with which He crowned the year; such was the ideal life of Israel's favoured son. And yet, under the influence of national misfortunes, and from the irresistible intrusion of Oriental ideas, which was largely promoted by the emigration of Jews to Alexandria — the very focus of such ideas—asceticism had crept even into this religion, so wise and so well rooted in the land of promise. The Essenes had become its apostles in Judæa — wearing white garments, abstaining from all animal food, living in obscurity and celibacy, and looking upon all contact with material things as a defilement. In Egypt the Therapeutics had adopted the same ideas and practices. A treatise of Philo on the contemplative life had depicted in words of high eulogium their solitary existence on the desert lands of Africa, a sort of foreshadowing of the life of the cenobite. The Oriental Platonism of Philo inclined him to accept the natural consequence of dualism. Neoplatonism was to go still further in the same direction, and to plunge Greek speculation into the ecstasy of annihilation, as into an atmosphere too rarefied for breathing.

There was another important reason for the growth of asceticism at this period: this was the utter failure of all the religions and philosophies of paganism to overcome the license of an unbridled sensuality. Since they could not control these impulses they were com-

pelled as a last resource to seek to crush them. Let it be clearly understood, asceticism is not a victory; it is a defeat; it is the desperate attempt to annihilate that corporeal element which cannot be kept in due subjection.

Primitive Christianity did not fall into this error. It waged war against the sensuality which blights and kills the soul, but it did no violence to natural and lawful instincts. It not only accepted all the conditions of family life, as we have seen, but gave them a new and firmer foundation. Undoubtedly it exalted the spiritual far above the visible world, and it displayed extraordinary energy in subduing the rebellious flesh. At first it carried to the extreme limits its precepts of renunciation of all the vanities and luxuries of the world. It cannot be denied, moreover, that the great apostle of Christianity was himself an ascetic by natural temperament, and that he expressed his own preferences in free and powerful language; but this only renders the more remarkable his high conception of the Christian life, which is entirely free from asceticism. On the one hand he carefully avoids any identification of the corporeal element with evil; and on the other he desires the disciple of Christ, whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, to do all to the glory of God. This is in direct opposition to asceticism, which in its most moderate form attaches a peculiar merit to self-macerations and privations, and does not admit the possibility of perfection under the conditions of ordinary life. St. Paul says expressly that "bodily exercise," by which he means asceticism, "profiteth little."* Christianity

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

is opposed to asceticism, not only in its ideas of morality, but also in its essential doctrines. Accepting the Jewish record of creation, it cannot regard nature as irremediably tainted with evil, since natural life proceeds from God. The incarnation of the Son of God is the central fact of its teaching. When it affirms that the Word was made flesh, it glorifies the corporeal element: the body of the Christian may become the temple of the Divine Spirit. Finally, proclaiming salvation as the gift of Divine mercy to the penitent heart, the gospel allows no room for meritorious works of self-mortification. These can possess no expiatory virtue, since the sacrifice of Calvary was the one complete expiation; they can only be means voluntarily chosen for assuring the triumph of the higher over the lower nature. These great principles were accepted and generally practised in the Church of the second century. The married state was not supposed to be one of inferiority.

The constitution of the Egyptian Church declares expressly that conjugal life presents no barrier to a life of faith, and does not render prayer less pure.* We have dwelt already at sufficient length on the liberal views of Clement of Alexandria on this point; we have seen how he exalts the sacred tie of fatherhood, and delights to represent the Saviour as seated in the middle of the family circle, as the Divine Guest, whose presence constitutes the church in the house. We know how completely he was opposed to the idea of two standards of morality. So far from regarding celibacy as a higher state of the Christian life, he considered it inferior to

* "Const. Eccles. Egypt." ii. 62.

marriage, as not affording the same opportunity for daily conflict and victory in the fulfilment of the duties of the family. The ideal Christian, whom he calls the Gnostic, is to submit to the ordinary conditions of life, not to avoid them. He is to drink, to eat, to marry. "Yes," says Clement, "the Christian marries if he is so commanded by the Word; have not the apostles set us this example? The true man does not show his strength in a lonely life. He is truly heroic who, in marriage, and in the duties of a family, and the care of a home, rises above mere pleasure and pain, abides closely united to God by love, arming himself against all the temptations that may come to him through wife and children, servants and goods.* The celibate escapes the most difficult of all ordeals; he is occupied only with himself, hence his great inferiority to the man who, instead of being absorbed wholly in seeking his own salvation, can devote himself also to the good of his house. The father of a family gives us some faint image of the Providence on which all things depend.† We must not take the great mind of Clement as the measure of the general opinion of the Church. Few of his contemporaries rose to such a height of spirituality; he only fulfilled, however, the true office of genius in bringing out in clear relief the true idea of Christianity, which acknowledges but one law of perfection, namely, conformity to the will of God, in whatever condition of life He has placed us. If the Christian ideal can be attained without breaking the bonds of family life, as

* Ἐκεῖνος ἀνδρας νικᾷ ὁ γάμῳ καὶ παιδοποίᾳ καὶ τῇ τοῦ οἴκου προνοίᾳ ἀνηδύνως τὲ καὶ ἀλυπήτως ἐγγυμνησάμενος ἀδιάστατος τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ γενόμενος ἀγάπης. Clement, "Strom." vii. 12, 70.

† Τῷ δὲ ἀοίκῳ τὰ πολλὰ εἶναι συμβέβηκεν ἀπειράστῳ. Ibid.

we see from the example of the apostles, then the elders and bishops can be under no obligation to celibacy. They are not destined to a life apart from their brethren; rather are they their representatives. No other view can be taken of their office without gravely impinging on the doctrine of the universal priesthood of Christians, and no such attempt was seriously made during the second century. No objection was raised to the marriage of the clergy. We find Cyprian even, in the middle of the third century, when the idea of asceticism had advanced step by step with the sacerdotal theory, bringing a grave charge against a priest, Novatus, not for being married, but for having ill-treated his pregnant wife.*

From the close of the second century, however, the tendency to asceticism began to develope itself in the Church.† It was, indeed, almost impossible for Christianity to escape the prevailing tendencies of the age. However successful the logical assaults upon Gnosticism, the steady growth in the number of its adherents proved that it was adapted to meet many secret instincts of the soul. Reproducing oriental theosophy under Christian symbols, it pronounced upon creation the same sentence of death as dualism, and thus harmonised with the bitter and melancholy mood of a period of decay. At the same time its pretension to open to the initiate the way to attain perfection by means of science and asceticism gratified human pride. What can be more flattering to man's self-love than a scheme which offers him salvation by his own peculiar merits? We

* "Uterus uxoris calce percussus." Cyprian, "Ep." 52, 3.
† See Baur, "Das Christenth. der drei erst. Jahrhund." p. 462.

have observed, as flowing side by side with the normal current of Christian thought, another secret current which carried along with it the popular imagination and presently the Church also. We trace its course in that curious apocryphal literature, which expresses exactly that which pleased the simple and ignorant. Now this literature is thoroughly imbued with asceticism, both in its fictitious gospels and in its apostolic legends, which are sometimes clothed in really striking forms.* The tendency of that curious romance of the "Clementines" is to the most rigid asceticism, advocating the constitution of a new people of God, to be entirely separated from the world by their contempt for both wealth and social life. The idea that marriage is essentially a defilement is presented, not without some poetical colouring, in the "Acts of Thomas." The "Acts of Thekla" give us the picture of the Christian Virgin, whose pre-eminent virtue is celibacy. "Pastor Hermas," which exercised so great an influence in the Church of the second century, tends in the same direction, and holds up to admiration the complete chastity which treats a wife as a sister.† Poverty also is praised for its own sake, the world and all that belongs to it being regarded as the property of a satanic power.

Montanism greatly strengthened this ascetic tendency by its peculiar doctrines as to the near end of the world and its insistance on the necessity of coming out of accursed Sodom, and watching day by day in fasting,

* See "Early Years of Christianity," vol. iii. Heresy and Christian Doctrine, p. 65.

† "Conjugis tuæ quæ futura est soror tua." "Hermas," book i. "Visio" ii. 2.

continence, and prayer, for the coming of the heavenly bridegroom. It would be needless for us to review again the Montanist system, since we have already said enough to show that its peculiar teachings tended simply to strengthen certain tendencies already existing in the Church, without deviating broadly from its doctrine. Hence the influence gained by this ardent and austere sect, which sustained the ancient rights of the Christian laity at once by a gloomy fanaticism and by the purest virtues. The Church, in truth, saw her own sentiments reflected in the favourite notions of the Montanists. She also, in the days when fierce persecution was at its height, believed that the end of all things was at hand. "The world is growing old," said Cyprian, "it has no longer the strength it once possessed. Like the sun at evening, it is tending to its decline; the earth is growing miserly; all things languish."* Another influence which did still more to foster asceticism was the prevailing belief among the Christians of that day that paganism was the reign of the demon, that evil spirits still governed the world, and were active and mighty with their seductive arts. Without admitting that creation was the work of a malevolent demiurgus, they believed that from the time of man's fall the demoniacal agencies had possessed great power. They traced their presence not only on Olympus, which they had peopled with false gods, but in the general life of humanity sold under sin, and especially in the false splendours and fascinations of pagan life. This demonology, which occupies so large a place in the theology even of so lofty a spirit

* "Sciré debes senuisse jam mundum." Cyprian, "Ad Demet." 3.

as Justin Martyr, is altogether favourable to asceticism, since its tendency is to urge men to flee from a world governed by the spirit of evil, the deadly influence of which is felt on every hand, and most of all in the dangerous fascination of woman—the Eve who is ever holding out to man the forbidden fruit. In the midst of so many provocations to sensuality, conscious of the sin mingling with the very life-blood in his veins and ever ready to pervert the natural instincts to unlawful uses, the disciple of the new faith was led to exaggerate the requirements of prudence, to confound simple obedience to the law of nature with impure self-indulgence, and to seek perfection not in the ordinary course of life but in that which was exceptional. A very important consequence followed from this abandonment of primitive spirituality, which had dealt less with acts than with the spirit and motive in which they were done, and which had claimed to set the Divine seal on the entire life in all its diversified relations. The life of the ascetic must be always an exceptional one; it could never be made the general rule. Hence there follows of necessity the recognition of two standards of morality—the one applicable to the mass of men in their ordinary life, the other restricted to the select few. Above the commandment addressed to all, we find the evangelical counsel, which is for the minority only, and foremost among this minority naturally appear the clergy, who, now that a hierarchy is growing up instead of the universal priesthood, are regarded as the special heritage of the Lord. There is nothing astonishing in the progress of asceticism in an age when the clerical idea was gaining ascendency. Its growth

was promoted also by the decline of the evangelical doctrine of salvation; for everything which tended to detract from the freeness of the Divine pardon, and to attach an expiatory value to the acts of men, was so much gained to the cause of asceticism. The large accessions to the number of the Christians in the intervals of persecution tended in the same direction; discipline was less easily maintained in large Churches, which admitted to their communion men without real piety, who, in joining the Church, acted rather under an impulsive feeling than from a sincere desire to change their lives. As the general level of piety sank, the truly pious sought refuge from the prevailing worldliness in a course of asceticism.

It was in reference to the question of second marriages that asceticism gained its first victory, for we can only regard as an isolated instance of exaggeration the imprudent language of Tatian, which would seem to imply nothing less than a total condemnation of marriage, and the recommendation of almost entire abstinence.* We have conclusive proof that the Church did not encourage these extreme opinions in the fact that Alcibiades, who had lived like a fakir in the Church of Lyons, when cast into prison in the time of persecution, was convinced of his error by one of his fellow-prisoners, named Attalus; and while awaiting martyrdom, consented to partake of the offerings brought by the abundant charity of the brethren, and took food with the rest.† The scruple with regard to second marriages, which arose out of a misread passage of St.

* Tatian, "Orat. ad Græcos," 2.

† Αλκιβιάδου πάνυ αὐχμηρὸν βιοῦντος βίον. Eusebius, "H. E." v. 3.

Paul's letter to Timothy, gained a firmer and firmer hold.* Athenagoras had already branded such marriages as no better than decent adultery, and Justin had described them with equal severity. Tertullian denounces them with remarkable vigour in treatises which, in spite of their Montanist tone, exerted a great influence over the Church. He is not content to urge considerations of feeling which should make the conjugal tie perpetual after death, by virtue of those sacred memories which are an integral part of our very life. He declares second marriages to be also in conflict with the primeval law of marriage promulgated by the Creator in the garden of Eden.† The Old Testament only connived at them by a momentary concession to human weakness. If St. Paul appears reluctantly to allow them in certain cases, this is also only a temporary compromise, to be abrogated by the Paraclete.‡ Moreover, in forbidding second marriages to the clergy, the apostle implicitly forbids them to all Christians, since there is no essential difference between the laity and the priests.§

It was vain to use casuistry, it was not possible to show that second marriages were condemned by Scripture, hence it was necessary in order to discourage them to have recourse to that higher morality which was of restricted application. Tertullian recognises two manifestations of the Divine will, the one which simply tolerates that which it cannot prevent; the other which exhibits God's preference.‖ The latter reveals to us

* 1 Tim. iii. 2. † Tertullian, "Monog." 9, 10.
‡ Ibid. 4-5. § Ibid. 14.
‖ "Non statim omne quod permittitur ex mera et tota voluntate procedit ejus." "De exhort. castit." 3.

the three orders of perfection—virginity, abstinence in marriage, and widowhood.* Substantially the arguments used against second marriages were equally valid in reference to marriage altogether. Their essence was not delicacy of affection for the dead, it was a growing antipathy to the union of the sexes. Tertullian does not disguise this, and says that the indulgence which Paul shows for marriage is rather to be imputed to himself than to God, for he is careful to tell us that he is speaking in his own name.† This prejudice against marriage was not restricted to the Montanists; it gained an ever-growing hold of the Christian conscience, leading it astray. Origen showed himself both by word and deed altogether favourable to asceticism. "All the evil which reigns in the body comes from the five senses,"‡ he says. The Platonic elements which the great Alexandrian blended with Christianity made him regard the body as inherently evil. The flesh is the covering of skin in which God enshrouded the fallen soul, and is its first chastisement.§ Although the Church did not follow Origen in this ingenious resuscitation of dualism divested of its fatalistic character, his influence nevertheless tended largely to exalt a false idealism by representing voluntary celibacy as the highest state of perfection. He held up to admiration not only a life of purity but one of absolute continence.‖

Cyprian, who is far more truly than Tertullian or

* Tertullian, "Monog." 1. † Ibid. 3.

‡ Quia omne vitium quod regnat in corpore ex quinque sensibus pendet." Origen, "In Numer. homil." 25, 3.

§ Ibid. "Selecta in Genes." ii. 29.

‖ "Et primitiæ nihilominus possunt intelligi Ecclesiæ virgines; decimæ quoque ii qui post conjugium continentes et caste vixerint." Ibid. "In Numer. homil." xi. 3.

Origen the representative of the Church of his time, gives equal honour to virginity. He extols it as the flower of the Church, its glory and crown, the true reflection of the Divine image in all its purity, the noblest portion of the Church of Christ; in it the glorious fecundity of the mother Church most emphatically appears.*

However the Church might glory in the triumphs of celibacy from the middle of the third century, it was too wise to make it a general rule, and thus to justify the charge freely brought against it of being the enemy of the human race. It adopted the theory of the evangelical counsel, while at the same time maintaining the lawfulness of marriage for the majority of Christian people. Tertullian himself could not but admit this, repugnant as it was to him. "If there were no marriage," he says, "what would become of mankind, and of the very man who opposes it?" If marriage were impossible, there would be no room for continence with its voluntary sacrifices.† The wise Dionysius of Alexandria found better reasons in its defence, when he reproached an ardent advocate of asceticism with laying on men's shoulders a burden too grievous to be borne.‡ Marriage was therefore looked upon as legitimate for the general body of believers, but nevertheless as an inferior condition of the spiritual life. Thus the tendency to interdict it in the case of the clergy grew stronger day by day. We have seen that second marriages were forbidden to these from the

* "Flos est ecclesiastici germinis, decus atque ornamentum gratiæ spiritualis, Dei imago respondens ad sanctimoniam Domini, illustrior portio gregis Christi." Cyprian, "De habitu virgin." 3.

† Tertullian, "Contra Marc." i. 29. ‡ Eusebius, "H. E." iv. 23.

second century; at the close of the next century first marriages were only tolerated in the case of bishops and priests when the engagement had been entered into before their ordination.* The Council of Smyrna in the year 305 allowed exceptions only in the case of deacons.† Bishops and priests who had contracted marriage before entering on their office were forbidden to separate from their wives.‡ The Council of Elvira made a violent innovation, when it required the married clergy to abstain from conjugal life.§ The Council of Nicæa revoked this rule, which had been passed in the excitement of an impending persecution. Voluntary virginity was encouraged beyond the ranks of the clergy, as is shown by the high eulogiums lavished on it by Cyprian. Origen, before him, had praised those who chose the life of a recluse and took a vow of voluntary poverty in order to serve God without distraction. He says, "If a man has given himself wholly to God, if he has laid aside all the cares of this present life, if he has separated himself from other men who live for it, seeking no longer the things which are below but those which are above, he is truly worthy to be called a saint.‖"

The same principles were applied to fasting. Montanism exerted a most important influence on this point also; and while the Church did not copy its example

* Μὴ ἐξεῖναι αὐτοῖς μετὰ χειροτονίαν ἀγάμοις οὖσιν ἔτι ἐπι γάμον ἔρχεσθαι. "Const. Apost." vi. 17.

† "Concil. Ancyr." Canon 10.

‡ "Canones eccles. qui dicuntur apostol." Canon 6.

§ "Concil. Eliberit." Canon 33.

‖ "Si quis separatus est et segregatus a reliquis hominibus carnaliter viventibus, iste merito sanctus appellatur." Origen, "In Levitic. homil." xi. 1.

in an abstinence worthy of Pythagoreans, it did accept its theory of the expiatory value of fasting. In the time of Tertullian the Church still used large liberty in this respect. There was no compulsory fast, except that of the great Easter week, on the night commemorative of the entombment of Christ.* The rules for fasting, however, were soon multiplied, and the custom of observing as days of vigil the Wednesday and Friday in each week, in memory of the Passion, became more and more general. Even the garments to be worn on these occasions were subsequently appointed by ecclesiastical rule. The idea that the perfect Christian should show in his outward garb the austerity of his life is germinally present in Tertullian's treatise on the mantle.† Its first application was naturally to the clergy. The Church thus drifted away further and further from the grand doctrine of the equality of all Christians which at first pervaded its entire life. In proportion as the evangelical counsel gained ground the common life of the Christian community declined, and the supposed elevation of the few implied the degradation of the many. The subsequent periods of the history of the Church show how dearly purchased was this false semblance of superior piety in the guise of asceticism.

* Tertullian, "De jejun." 2.
† See the Treatise of Tertullian, "De pallio."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE CATACOMBS.*

IT is not our design to take up the archæological questions which arise out of the catacombs of Rome: our idea is only to draw from the symbolical inscriptions which cover their walls some information as to the life of the Christians in the second and third centuries of our era, and thus at once to sum up and to confirm this history of the primitive Church. There is no historical monument comparable to the catacombs as a source of intimate knowledge of a religion through the

* M. Rossi's extensive work, "La Roma sotterranea," of which the first two volumes have appeared, and which cannot be separated from his "Bulletino di Archeologica Christiana," is the great authority for all connected with this subject. (De Rossi, "Roma sotterranea Christiana," vols. i. and ii.; "Roma Cromolitographia pontificia." By the same author, "Bulletino di Archeologica Christiana," 1863–1877.) It is by the aid of these documents, confirmed and verified by a personal study of the monuments of Christian Rome, that the writer now supplements his former exposition of this great subject. The reader is referred further to the "Dictionnaire des antiquités Chrétiennes," by the Abbé Martigny (Paris, Hachette, 1865), and to the excellent work of M. le Blant, "Inscriptions Chrétiennes de la Gaule (vols. i. and ii. Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1865), and to M. de Rossi's work, "Inscription. Christ. urbis Romæ septimo sæculo antiquiores," vol. i. Rome, 1861. See also "Subterranean Rome," an epitome of M. de Rossi's discoveries in the Roman catacombs, by J. Spencer Northcote and William R. Brownton. I desire to tender my acknowledgments to M. T. Roller for having kindly allowed me to see some important passages of the great work he is about to publish on the catacombs with this title, "Les Catacombes de Rome. Histoire de l'art et des croyances religieuses pendantles premiers âges du Christianisme."

feelings of its faithful adherents. In fact, the first Christian cemeteries have this peculiar interest for us, that we find in them the spontaneous utterances of the heart, never intended for the public eye, and which are therefore far more trustworthy than the studied and formal statements of religious thought and feeling which we get in books. The catacombs show us the inner life of the Christians in all its simplicity as it sought expression in its hours of deepest grief. The voice we hear is not that of a bishop or doctor speaking *ex cathedrâ*, but the voice of Rachel weeping for her children, of Martha and Mary by the grave of Lazarus pouring forth at once their sorrow and their hope. We find the record of the Church's faith and unfaltering courage over the tombs of her glorious martyrs, and the simple story of family affection traced in trembling lines or set forth in some touching symbol. We attach peculiar importance to these unstudied revelations of the thoughts and feelings of the early Christians, made in moments when the human heart was stirred to its depths, and the life raised by the pressure of grief above its ordinary level. It would be altogether erroneous to suppose that in such hours a man is less himself than in the commonplace round of daily existence. On the contrary, these are the true revealing moments when the veil of conventionalities is rent by the rude hand of death; and thus in many respects we find in the catacombs our surest and most valuable source of information about the inner life of the first Christians.

It is simply impossible to convey in words the impression produced as we walk through those long dark passages, the walls of which contain so many sacred

remains, and are covered with innumerable inscriptions and symbolical frescoes. It seems as though all that sacred dust revived, kindled by the immortal flame that dwelt within it; as though the vision of the prophet of Israel were repeated. The dead bones live, and the heroic Church of the first ages stands before us victorious over all her pretended victors, whose defeat she foretold in her expressive symbols. To one familiar with this great past of the Church it all becomes again a living reality in the catacombs, and he gains one of those rapid intuitions never to be forgotten, which overleap ages in a moment, and make him live, as it were, in the dim past.

We shall not dwell at any length on the origin of the catacombs, since the subject is too extensive, but shall briefly recapitulate generally received results. We have already shown that the catacombs must not be confounded with the vast quarries out of which Rome was built. While these quarries are arranged for a multitude of labourers, and are hollowed in the *tufa lithoïde*, the catacombs are formed in the *tufa granolare*, and consist of a succession of narrow passages crossing each other and broken by vaulted caves called *Arcosolia*, in which the great symbolical frescoes were placed. Each catacomb contains several stories, connected by stairs: small openings make a passage for the air. In these walls were spaces left in the masonry called *loculi*, in which the remains of the dead were laid. They were closed with tiles or slabs of marble, on which were placed the inscriptions and frescoes. The principal catacombs of the Via Appia and of the Via Ardentina are those of Callixtus, of Domitilla (which bears also the

names of Achilles and Nereus, her chamberlains, who were beheaded for their faith), and lastly, of St. Pretextatus. The catacomb of St. Agnes is on the Via Nomentana; that of Priscilla and of Saturninus on the Via Salaria; that of St. Peter and Marcellinus on the Via Labicana, not far from St. John de Lateran; that of St. Pontianus on the Via Portesa. Another catacomb has been discovered on this same way, occupying in 1869 the site of the entombment of the Fratres Arvales. This is probably that which was known under the name of Santa Generosa. The catacomb of St. Sebastian is on the Via Appia, the only one of which any knowledge was retained in the middle ages. It has been despoiled of its ornaments, and is of inferior interest.*

We have refuted the mistaken idea that the Christians used their cemeteries as subterranean chapels, in which to worship. This was never the case. We know that they only began to have religious edifices, properly so called, in the third century, and that they then possessed a considerable number in the city. Under Alexander Severus more than forty were counted. It is beyond doubt that in the height of the persecutions they often sought refuge in the catacombs. It is equally certain that the obsequies, especially of confessors, were celebrated there by torchlight, and in

* The principal excavations made by M. Rossi are described in the two volumes of his "Roma Sotterranea" already issued. Since then his most important discovery in the catacombs has been that of the Basilica of St. Petronilla, on the site of the tomb of the martyrs Achilles and Nereus. He there found a form representing a matron being welcomed by Petronilla into Paradise. See "Bulletin d'archeol. Chret." 1874, Nos. 1, 2, 4; 1875, No. 1. Both the basilica and the fresco, however, belong to the fourth century, and do not come therefore within the scope of this work.

the presence of large concourses of people. The catacomb was always essentially the Christian cemetery: this is its true description. The adherents of the proscribed religion desired to rest in death side by side with the martyrs who had sustained the honour of their cause. The Church loved to gather, even at the grave, around her confessors, as an army forms its ranks around its valiant captains. The tombs of the martyrs are not to be distinguished with certainty by any outward sign. What were supposed to be instruments of torture represented in the catacombs, are now discovered to be implements of labour. The vases once imagined to contain the coagulated blood of the confessors, prove to be only eucharistic vessels, as is shown by such inscriptions as this, "Drink reverently." The only certain indication of the tombs of the martyrs are those supplied by the itineraries of the pilgrims, or the epitaphs.

If we seek to learn from the catacombs something of the spiritual life of the Church of the early ages, we can trace it under various aspects. The extent of its missions, and the triumphs which crowned its vast and unceasing labours, are evidenced by the countless host of those whose graves fill the city of the dead: they are estimated at several millions. The inscriptions on the tombs show that the converts to Christianity were gathered from all classes, and that the higher ranks of Roman society supplied a large contingent. The illustrious families of the Cæcilii, the Æmilii, the Octavii, and Cornelii, and even the imperial houses of Domitian and Flavian, have their representatives in the cata-

combs.* The ground in which the first galleries of the catacomb of St. Callixtus were built was given to the Church by a lady of high rank, who had received the surname of Lucina.

As this part of the catacombs is as old as the foundation of the Church of Rome, the attempt has been made to discover what patrician of the first century could have given so striking a proof of her generosity to the Christians. We learn from Tacitus that a great lady of the illustrious family of Pomponius Bassus, called Pomponia Græcina, was with great difficulty acquitted, through her husband's efforts, of the charge of having embraced a dark and gloomy creed, which may easily have been that of the Christians.† The fact that a tomb has been discovered in the catacomb given by Lucina to the Church, bearing the name of *Pomponius Græcinus*, proves that one of the descendants of this great Roman lady was buried there. It is easy to conceive that, in the event of her having made such a gift to the Church, a place may have been reserved for her posterity. The catacomb of Domitilla, which is also of high antiquity, is a memorial of the generosity of Flavia Domitilla, who belonged to the imperial noblesse. These conversions to Christianity among the Roman aristocracy do not at all impugn its success at the same time as a mission work among the poor: the nameless multitudes who fill the catacombs belonged to the despised and oppressed lower classes. In this blending of

* Rossi, "Roma sotterranea," vol. iii. c. 1–3. M. Rossi has found in the catacombs of "Domitilla" several inscriptions belonging to the Flavian family, among others, this in Greek characters, "Flavius Sabinus et Tatiana," ἀδελφοι. "Bulletin d'archéol. Chrét." ii. p. 40 *et seq.*

† Tacitus, "Annals," xiii. 32.

all ranks is emphatic evidence of the power of Christianity to vindicate the claim of humanity, and to maintain it in the presence of death and eternity as above all social distinctions.

The catacomb is not the common pit of the Esquiline Gate, into which the corpses of slaves and artisans were thrown, nor is it the magnificent *Columbarium* attached to great houses: it is the *Cœmeterium*, the place where rich and poor sleep side by side till the resurrection morning. The nearer we get to the primitive age of Christianity, the more completely do we find all social distinctions effaced. The most erudite explorers of Christian antiquity agree in acknowledging that the old inscriptions are absolutely silent as to the rank of the Christians buried in the catacombs: of all the thousands of epitaphs that have been deciphered, two only make allusion to the condition of slave or free man. All the rest pass over in silence those antecedents of the life which form so elaborate a part of most pagan inscriptions.*

The catacombs bear witness also to that other great social revolution, closely allied to the first, which removed the reproach from free labour. As we have already observed, the supposed instruments of torture prove to be for the most part merely mechanics' tools. These find an honourable place in the frescoes on the tombs. There we see the smith striking his anvil, while his comrade blows the forge; there is the comb of the wool-carder, the spade and pruning-knife of the

* See Rossi's "Inscriptiones Christianæ urbis Romæ septimo seculo antiquiores," vol. i. Rome, 1861. "Prolegom." § 4. Edmond le Blant, "Inscriptions Chrétiennes de la Gaule," i. 119.

gardener, the vessel full of corn, which is the usual sign of the baker: none of these trades, not even that of the fossor, is degrading. Labour is in itself honourable and honoured.* The Church seems to have endeavoured in these catacombs, where she was free from all restraint, to indicate by the most significant symbols the nature of the great social reform at which she aimed. We are carried back to the time when she enjoyed perfect freedom in all her offices, by the remarkable inscription in the cemetery of Callixtus, which describes a Christian named Dionysius as fulfilling at once the duties of priest and physician.† This denotes the absence of any distinction between sacred and profane, between the activity of the layman and the duties of the priest. Thus the grand unity of the religious life was affirmed in a manner perfectly simple and clear.

We need not again dwell at any length on the information supplied by the catacombs with regard to the persecutions. Here we find the great and glorious poem of martyrdom graven on stone. The catacomb of St. Callixtus had the honour from the early part of the third century of being the resting-place of the great Roman bishops who suffered for the faith.‡ A fresco long concealed in an upper gallery of this catacomb gives a vivid representation of the great fight of faith against force. This picture is unique of its kind, for the persecuted

* Rossi, "Roma sotterranea," ii. c. 11, tav. 45, 55. "Inscript. Christ." p. 416. Rossi, "Bulletin d'archéol. Chrét." 1865. p. 32. "Inscript. Christ." p. 14.

† *Διονύσιον ἰατρον πρεσβύτερον.* Rossi, "Rom. sotter." vol. i. tav. 21, 9.

‡ See, on this point, the conclusive demonstration of M. Rossi. He has found the broken fragments of the inscriptions on the tombs of Bishops Fabianus, Anteros, Eutychius, Cornelius, and Urban. "Rom. sotter." i. c. 5. The magnificence of the structures, and the inscriptions of the pilgrims of the fifth and sixth centuries also, leave no doubt on the subject.

Christians were ever more ready to represent the triumph of faith than their sufferings and wrongs. The Roman magistrate is here depicted seated in the midst of the forum; he has all the arrogance of irresistible power; it is plain that through him is heard the voice of Cæsar; before him is a Christian being examined. It is impossible to describe the calm serenity and gentle firmness conveyed by his look and gesture. We feel as we gaze that nothing can daunt him, that he represents a power higher than that of all the prætors and proconsuls. A man clothed in priestly robes is retreating hurriedly from the forum; his attire is that of a pagan priest; it is evident that this is the denouncer who has brought the Galilean before the judge. The condemnation of the accused is certain, but the flight of the accuser shows that in reality it is he who is vanquished. He knows well that though he may kill the man he cannot kill the faith, which in the end will overturn all his idols and lay them in the dust. This fresco sets before us that sublime scene so often described in the Acts of the Martyrs, the brief decisive dialogue between the representative of the new faith and the armed defender of the ancient State. We seem to hear the simple confession, *Christianus sum*, repeated through three centuries by thousands of voices, and of which the *Polyeucte* of Corneille brings to our ears the triumphant echo. We could imagine ourselves present at the trial of Polycarp or Justin. The confessor seems, in the moment of condemnation, to behold with the eye of faith the chariot of fire waiting to carry him up to heaven, a symbol constantly repeated in the *Arcosolia* of the martyrs.

Even in the exalted frame of mind produced by persecution the Church did not cut herself off from social life. We have ample evidence of her wisdom and moderation. She resisted oppression in the name of right, and on the same principle she took advantage of the legislation of the Empire whenever it was favourable to her. This is shown by the very existence of the catacombs. Archæologists have often asked how the Christians could have achieved such works in safety, under the constant peril of proscription. This historical problem remained insoluble till the valuable discoveries of the right of association granted in imperial Rome. It has been shown that, while this law repressed severely all political associations, it gave large immunities to societies formed for purposes of burial. The despotism of the Cæsars, so indifferent to human life, showed itself more scrupulous over the dead than over the living. It would have shrunk from measures which would have rendered impossible those funeral ceremonies to which pagan superstition attached great influence over the destinies of the soul. The recent discovery of the rules of one of these associations, called by the names of Diana and Antinous, has brought to our knowledge the actual text of the Senatus Consultus, which gave exceptional privileges to burial clubs. It runs thus: "That the right of association be granted to those who desire to form burial clubs, on condition that they only meet once a month to make the necessary payments for the burial of their dead." * Feasts in honour of the de-

* "Liceat qui stipem menstruam conferre volent in funera, semel in mense." "Inscript. Latin. select. amplissim. collect." Orellius-Henzen, Turin. 1828–1855. No. 6086.—Comp. Mommsen, "De collegiis et sodalitat." p. 87.—"Histoire de la religion Romaine," par Gustave Boissier, vol. ii. p. 313.

ceased quickly became an important feature of these societies, and enjoyed the same toleration. In order to increase their resources, which, notwithstanding the rule of weekly payments, were often insufficient, they chose wealthy patrons, who endowed them liberally. Lastly, they put themselves under the protection of certain gods, whose name they assumed. The members of these societies were called respectively, *cultores Dianæ*, *Herculis*, *Jovis*, and so on. We have even a formal passage from the Digest authorising associations of this kind.* Such was the organisation of these burial clubs, and such were their recognised privileges. It has been shown, not only by analogy, but on irrefragable evidence, that the Christians formed associations in all respects similar to those thus authorised by the law, conforming as far as possible, and with great ingenuity, to the usages universally adopted in the Empire. Thus one authentic inscription is to the effect that a Christian named Evolpius, described as *cultor Verbi*, a worshipper of the Word, built at his own expense a Christian burial-place. The name of Christ is thus substituted for that of the pagan deity which appeared at the head of the ordinary societies. These were called fraternities, and the Christian association takes the same name. Even the monthly subscription is adopted by the Church from the customs in common use, and sanctioned by the authorities.† It is also said that the Christians often obtained the site which they used from the generosity of rich families who had embraced

* "Permittitur tenuioribus stipem menstruam conferre." Dig. 47, 22, 1.

† See Rossi, "Roma sotterranea," vol. i. c. 1, § 4. An inscription on this same model has been discovered by M. Renier in Africa. "Inscriptions de l'Algerie." No. 4026.

the faith. The catacomb of Domitilla recals by its name the munificence of one of the great Roman ladies of the imperial house. But these private grants of land soon became insufficient. The Church possessed an institution which gave her another very important point of resemblance with the authorised clubs. This was the Agape, the brotherly repast, which had been a custom observed from apostolic times. What more easy than to let this represent the funeral feast, so dear to the pagan fraternities? And this was done. More than one simple inscription bears witness to the fact. The very hall of the Agape has been discovered in the peristyle of the catacomb of Domitilla. There are the stone seats for the guests, and the cistern to supply water for the meal.* Nothing could be a stronger proof how completely the Church adapted herself to the usages of the burial clubs, in order to gain the advantage of the liberal measures extended to them. Here we have the solution of a historical problem, which appeared at first incapable of explanation; and we now understand how the thousands of Christians belonging to the great Church of Rome were enabled to build their city of the dead.

By conforming to the practices and customs of Roman society, in so far as they did not involve compliance with paganism, the Church showed that if primitive Christianity was inflexible in its opposition to idolatry, it did not seek to assume the position of a factious sect, or to place itself outside the pale of society or of the law. On the contrary, it repudiated unhesitatingly the fierce fanaticism of the Montanists, which broke with

* I have visited it with M. de Rossi.

all social ties, predicting that the world would soon be consumed in the flames of the last judgment. The Christians never desired to be zealots, with hand uplifted against all the institutions of the Empire: on the contrary, they appealed to these institutions whenever they were founded on right. Had not the great Apostle Paul pleaded before the magistrates of Philippi the formula on which Cicero so eloquently enlarged—*Civis Romanus sum?* nor did he hesitate to appeal to Cæsar's judgment-seat.

We have seen how, while it did not seek to destroy the State, Christianity made it its first task to elevate and sanctify the family relations. The tenderness of natural affection is abundantly shown in the catacombs; the Christian family, that noble creation of the new religion, is there exhibited in its depths of love and sorrow. It has been remarked that the inscriptions on the graves have a special character; they do not adhere to the ordinary style of epitaph; they often adopt a tone of passionate apostrophe, as, for example, Live in God! Drink His cup! Be in peace! The survivor addresses the departed as if he were still living, and at his side. His grief finds most touching expression; he uses every term of endearment, and counts up the years, months, days, hours, in which the beloved object was his own. The head of the family receives all due reverence. This was but in accordance with ancient Roman custom. That which is more remarkable from its novelty is the place accorded to the wife and mother. To what a moral elevation the Christian woman has been raised, we may judge from the *orantes* of exquisite purity, so often seen in the catacombs. One glance is enough to

show the extent of the moral renovation effected. It is a mistake to suppose that these *orantes* represent Madonnas. They are rather types of the Christian wife and mother diffusing around her an atmosphere of purity and prayer, training up her children for a higher life, and implanting in their hearts memories never to be effaced, even in the wild career of youthful passion. Above many of these images we read the name of the deceased. In the catacomb of Callixtus an *orante* is represented between two lambs. Have we not in this fresco the most touching symbol of Christian motherhood?

We find in the catacombs a large number of *loculi* of very narrow dimensions. These are the graves of little children. The Church spreads her wing over the newborn babe. The parents loved to call to mind the innocent sportiveness of their children, even over their tombs: in the catacomb of Callixtus we often find their toys represented. A fresco on one of these *loculi* shows the figure of a child holding out a bunch of grapes to a bird. There is more than mere grace in these artless outlines; they breathe at once the severest piety and the tenderest feelings of humanity. The large liberty enjoyed by these early Christians is the best proof of the strength of their religion: petty restrictions are like the leading-strings used to assure a tottering gait.

It is not only the heroism and the tenderness of the Christian heart which thus find expression on the walls of the *Cœmeteria;* we read there also the record of the religious thought and faith of the Church. In this time of deep emotion that faith was the simple, sincere expression of a broken heart, and knew nothing of theo-

logical quibbles. It rejoiced in its freedom from the painful uncertainties of paganism as to a future life; it left far behind both the elevated aspirations of the first book of the Æneid, which led to the Pythagorean metamorphoses, and the subtle argument of the *Phædo*, which ended in a *perhaps*. It had no relation to that pagan materialism which would perpetuate in death the life of earth, and surround the dead man with the weapons of his warfare or the insignia of his state. The catacomb becomes a second cave of Joseph of Arimathea, where the disciple is laid like his Master, only to await the day when the stone shall be rolled away from the sepulchre. Nay, more, there is no interruption in the relation between earth and heaven. The Christians speak to their beloved dead as if they were by their side, and wish them an eternal rest. The Christian catacomb raises us far above the uncertainties and confused myths of paganism: it breathes a calm faith in a blessed immortality. Every tablet in the wall bears this impress, so constantly do we find the inscription repeated, *In pace!* Sometimes it is followed by the words, *In Deo vivis*, or by symbols which cannot be misunderstood, such as the anchor in the form of a cross, expressive of the immovable hope of the Christian, or the dove finding refuge in the ark with the green olive branch in its beak, the image of a soul which has safely reached the eternal shore. It may be remarked that this belief in the immediate blessedness of the departed appears in three different stages. First, there is the simple assertion, *He is in peace, he lives.* Then it is expressed as a desire and hope, and finally as a prayer, asking that peace may be

given to the beloved soul. The very mode of Christian burial is opposed to all the ideas of metempsychosis so current at this period. It is an attestation of the indestructible personality of the man, who is to live again in his entirety. Hence the Church, following the example of the Jews, objected to the cremation of the body. It believes that, while awaiting the great resurrection day, the soul enjoys the presence of God in an intermediate state, which has no analogy with purgatory, as is evident from its name—the place of refreshment, or *Refrigerum*. This is repeatedly mentioned on the tombs of the Christians.

With reference to the Christian doctrine properly so called, the catacombs give us the broadest possible view of it: they carry us back to what is known as the apostolic creed, which was simply the expansion of the confession required of every catechumen on the day of his baptism. We find ourselves still in the age of freedom, which precedes the great councils and their theological decretals. The faith which lives in the representations on the catacombs is peculiarly characterised by the absence of theology, properly so called, with its subtle distinctions and formal systems; so much so, that there is no believer even in our day who may not find there the simple and popular expression of his own faith. Religious truth there appears as a yet undivided inheritance, to be shared by the whole family of Christ. Here, in this hiding-place from persecution, we find the most powerful affirmation of that broad evangelical catholicity which has formed more or less the creed of all the greatest minds of the Church. We shall show this by simply enunciating the principal symbols under

which the Church of the catacombs delighted to express its faith.

As we approach those first times of persecution which must have appeared the most terrible, we find the Church using a mysterious symbolism intelligible only to the initiate. It was however very simple, and consisted essentially in the reproduction of certain features of Scripture history, which received a new and special significance from the circumstances under which they were used. The part played by the fish in these symbols is familiar to all. The Greek word ἰχθύς was taken for an abbreviation of the sacred formula, Ἰησοῦς Χρίστος ὑίος Θέου, because it was composed of the initial letters of these words. The sacrament of baptism was symbolised by the miraculous draught of fishes, and that of the Eucharist by the representation of the mystical meal which we learn from the Fourth Gospel took place by the shore of the Lake of Tiberias after the resurrection of Christ.* Controversy can gain no advantage for either side from these frescoes, to which no precise theological meaning was attached, at least in the early ages. The palm, the anchor, the crown, are symbols which speak for themselves, like the anagram which interlaces the name of Jesus Christ with the cross, and which only assumed its definitive form under Constantine. The leading doctrines of the gospel are symbolised by some scene from Scripture, often treated with con-

* Rossi, "Roma sotterranea," vol. ii. c. 13, 14. See also Martigny's "Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne." We do not here enter on the discussion of the interpretation of these symbols. We remark only that the symbol alone belongs to the first three centuries, the commentary on it is of a later date. See Rossi, work quoted, ii. tav. 15. On the ἰχθύς, "Spicileg. Solemn." iii. p. 561. Let us bear in mind that everything in these frescoes is symbolical, and not realistic.

siderable artistic skill. Adam and Eve beside the fatal tree, represent the Fall. Moses, the great preparation of the first covenant. He is often set forth striking the rock with his miraculous rod, and making the water flow forth for the people, who eagerly drink—a suggestive type of that thirst for truth which had so long been the torture of the soul, and which the early Fathers so eloquently described.

Subsequently we find a representation of the Apostle Peter, but this belongs to a much later date than the third century. The Samaritan woman by Jacob's well brought to mind the same longing for truth, with its satisfaction. The Magi following the star and worshipping the infant Saviour, proclaimed that the long hope had not been disappointed. The sacrifice of Abraham, sometimes treated with sublime pathos, rehearsed the mystery of the Redemption. The resurrection of Lazarus, constantly reproduced, was the protest of Christian hope against the gloomy realities of death. Jonah emerging from the whale, was the type of eternal life triumphing over the grave. Noah in the ark of safety was the Church rising above the floods of persecution. Daniel in the lion's den recalled the terrible cry, "The Christian to the lions!"

The Gospel of the Childhood occupies an important place in the catacombs: the Virgin of Nazareth constantly appears presenting the infant Jesus to the Magi, but is never herself the object of adoration. The Gospel scenes are rendered with singular vividness. The miraculous cures symbolise the permanent miracle of moral renovation. The apostles, and foremost among them St. Peter and St. Paul, who are always placed upon an

equality, as we see them admirably represented in the bronze medal preserved in the museum of the Vatican, are painted sometimes in groups, sometimes as gathered around the Master at the paschal feast. The sarcophagi on which are representations of the arrest of the Lord and His appearance before the Roman proconsul, belong probably to the fifth century; for, as we have already said, the persecuted Church draws a veil of glory over the closing scenes of the humiliation. In the frescoes and sarcophagi which belong probably to the close of the third century, the Christians remind themselves of the duty of watchfulness and the shame of falling away, by representations of Peter's denial. The whole lesson is briefly conveyed by the image of a cock, since the crowing of that bird was the warning to Peter on the fatal morning.* Pilate is often represented washing his hands: to the persecuted this was a simple and powerful way of saying that their proscription was without excuse, and that their blood was on the hands of the unjust judges who condemned them without a cause. This primitive symbolism is derived almost entirely from the sacred books. From the Apocrypha of the Old Testament the only allusion is to Tobias. In the catacombs at Naples is a fresco, unique of its kind, which represents the erection of the mystical tower in "Pastor Hermas." There is one image which the early Christians constantly reproduced, and which seems like the living *Credo* of the Church: this is the Good Shepherd bearing home on His shoulders the sheep which was lost. The Christian art of early times delighted in multiplying these representations, striving

* See the plates in "Roma sotterranea," vol. ii.

to clothe with ineffable tenderness and grace this ideal personification of the Divine mercy. How far removed is all this from the quibbles of a rigid and implacable dogmatism! The very soul of the gospel breathes in this favourite fresco: it is the simple, grand story of Divine love seeking the lost soul on the dark mountains. No formulary could so well convey the eternal truth of Christianity, or could so severely condemn the fratricidal strife of intolerance.

Side by side with these purely evangelical symbols, we have others which have freely borrowed from paganism, though they are made by a bold system of interpretation to embody the Christian idea. Such are the dolphin, the peacock, the phœnix, images of immortality. Sometimes we find winged genii and poetical representations of the seasons; sometimes Psyche and Orpheus, in whom Clement of Alexandria discovered an original type of the Word, subduing our passions by the celestial harmony of His voice. Again we have Ulysses surrounded by sirens. The generous apology of the Fathers of the Eastern Church, who discerned a germ of the Word in every heart of man, and a sort of foreshadowing of Christianity in the higher culture of the ancient world, also finds confirmation in the catacombs, even in a Church so little given to speculative tendencies as the Church of Rome. The nearer we come to the cradle of Christianity, the less do we find of petty scruples, and the more of true liberty of spirit. The decoration of the Hall of the Agape in the Catacomb of Domitilla, which is one of the earliest, is full of life and freshness, and the same remark will apply to the Catacomb of St. Pretextatus. The style is classic,

and reminds one of the elegant pencilling of the frescoes found in the palaces and villas of the Roman aristocracy. We observe the same freedom of manner in the treatment of evangelical subjects. There is no approach as yet to the rigid types of a conventional art, such as will presently arise at Byzantium, and substitute the gilded nimbus for the flash of the eye, freezing the life, and petrifying it into certain consecrated forms. The almost Byzantine figure of Christ found in the tomb of St. Agnes is of much later date. The figures which belong to the second and third centuries are far more instinct with life. Archæologists regard this free and living character of the mural paintings of the catacombs as a sure index to their date.

Christian art is obviously a new thing, at least in the thoughts which it embodies, though it makes use of the methods which have been handed down to it by ancient art, and is itself developed slowly, as lacking the stimulus of success. Its originality is readily perceived by a comparison of the figures painted in the frescoes of the catacombs with those masterpieces of pagan antiquity which fill the museums of Rome. The outline of the features is the same—the severe, correct profile of the sons of the kingly people; but what a change in the expression; what new divine enthusiasm animates the face. There has been a great inward conflict and conquest. The highest type of beauty is not now the subtle grace, the Olympian calm of the Greek, nor the proud dignity of the old Roman: it is the deep feeling of the soul, eloquent of hope and love. The glowing aureole which, in Christian art, encircles the head, is woven of faith and charity. The world within

and the world above have set their impress on these faces, which were cast originally in the same mould as those of the statues in the Capitol. As we gaze on the Virgin in the catacomb of Priscilla, we feel that the art which by the hand of Raphael will fix upon canvas the purest ideal of Christian beauty, is already born among these proscribed Christians, who, in the brief interval of rest from persecution, hurriedly trace these noble outlines in memory of the confessors who have just fallen victims.

Thus do the catacombs bring again before our eyes the image of that Ante-Nicene Church which blended with its ardent faith the truest humanity, whether by that word we mean to express the large brotherhood in which all minor distinctions are lost, or the natural affections, that tenderness which is the source alike of our highest joys and bitterest anguish. Ready to die for his God, the Christian of this age comes before us as the unflinching advocate of his rights as a man, appealing to the law of his country against injustice, and refusing to be cast out of society as a fanatic who has no interests in common with his fellows. Neither can he be justly reproached with being an enemy to the beautiful: so far from repudiating art as a form of idolatry, he accepts that he may renovate it. The sect which Tacitus (who was capable of a truer appreciation) accused of hating humanity, has been in fact the conservator of its best treasures.

CONCLUSION.

LET us recapitulate in a few broad outlines this history of the most marvellous of human revolutions. Born amid the ignoble and the base, hidden like a lost thing in a remote corner of the world, founded by One whose life began in a stable and ended on a cross, Christianity commences its great work, poor and proscribed, and having, as said one of its first apostles, neither silver nor gold. In these its days of obscurity and persecution it reached its ideal: this was truly the reign of the Spirit upon earth, and it mattered little to its subjects whether they were found in the poor upper chamber at Jerusalem, in some humble quarter of Ephesus or Corinth, or in a gloomy prison cell in Rome. The religion for which all hearts athirst for God had been waiting had come, and it fulfilled all the best aspirations of mankind, which had been able to conceive but never to realise that which Christianity made possible. This religion came to bring at once comfort and freedom, to impart with the Divine forgiveness a new and pure life, to put an end to all the bondage of the past, and to animate all the future with an inspiration of love and holiness. It not only so raised the lot of the individual, but it founded also a new society, freed from the bonds of the pagan state as from

those of the Jewish theocracy—a society of believing souls based upon a common faith, and upon this faith it established the grand equality of the universal priesthood, while at the same time so organising its powers as to unite order with liberty. Its whole life was Christ. Full of a pure and ardent devotion to the crucified One, Christians looked to no other name for the salvation of the world, and made it their task to gather up and to preserve His words. His memory is their chief treasure, and they are animated and fortified by His living Spirit. To suffer and to die for Him they count happiness and glory. Guided by His apostles, who are pre-eminently the witnesses of the Master, they seek to reproduce His perfect image; in them He lives again upon earth, and they pour out their blood freely to carry on His work of enfranchisement and universal restoration, never doubting that the nations to whom they are sent have been given to them by Him.

This state of spiritual exaltation could scarcely be permanent. When the last of the apostles had died at Ephesus, Christianity underwent the same sort of change as is supposed to pass over the primary emanation of Oriental Gnosticism, which becomes more and more opaque as it descends from the upper into the lower sphere. Christianity long remained, however, true to its origin. The labours and conflicts of the Church in the second and third centuries of our era, present annals of such heroism as can scarcely be paralleled in history. Its missions were rapidly extended throughout the whole Roman empire, and embraced all classes of society. The gospel of Christ was heard alike in the palace of Cæsar, in the workshops, and in

the lowest haunts of slavery and sin, and proved itself the power of God unto salvation to a vast number whose prayers and praises rose in many tongues to the same Saviour, thus exalting the one religion of humanity above all distinctions of race or language. Freedom of conscience—that most precious heritage of mankind—was vindicated through three centuries of persecution. Christians might lose their lives in the circus or on the scaffold, but in the higher domain of thought they were victorious still, trampling beneath their feet all the scornful or learned opposition of paganism. The great apologetic school founded at Alexandria in the second century, handed down to posterity a heritage of Christian thought so rich and large that it has not yet been exhausted. Here was made the most successful attempt to harmonise the new religion with ancient culture. In this direction, also, Christianity showed its freedom from all national exclusiveness; it offered itself as the final religion simply because it satisfied the universal needs, which previous religions had expressed in mythical and fantastic forms, but had never been able to appease.

Stimulated by the necessity of self-defence both against pagan speculation and heresies which were often the reappearance under a new disguise of the old natural religions, Christianity proceeded to develop its theology, allowing perfect freedom of thought on all points not essential. While it held fast the one universal *Credo* enshrined in the deep heart of all its disciples, it was careful not in any way to discourage diversity and originality of thought in its schools. There was as yet no attempt at an organised or cen-

tralised unity, nor was there any dominant authority vested in a man or in a council, before which all opinions were to bow. When one Roman bishop in the second century, and another in the third, attempted to impose his views on the Christian East or on the Church of Africa, they encountered unconquerable opposition, and Cyprian and Irenæus alike denounced the usurpation. Two centuries after Christ, the ecclesiastical constitution, as we know from documents of indisputable authority, yet maintained the grand liberties of the Christian people, and the universal priesthood was still recognised, in spite of a growing tendency to encroachment on the part of the episcopate. Worship was still essentially the living sacrifice of the devout soul presented in prayer, the eucharist of grateful love, making itself an offering, not as an atonement for its sin, but in order to bless others. There were as yet no holy places, properly so called, no holy days, no holy caste. Every Christian home was a temple of God, and the father of the family its natural priest. Thus were brought about those great reformations which abolished all the privileges founded on the old exclusive right of citizenship, and established on the broad basis of humanity the equal claims of woman, child, and slave, with the free man. These reforms, carried out first in the home, laid the foundations of a new state of society.

Doubtless this grand Christianity of the early ages seemed fast degenerating from the latter half of the third century. The Church lost her hold of that great doctrine of justification by faith which is the source and safeguard of all her liberties, because it alone places

the Christian on the sure footing of a pardoned child of God, free from all those servile fears under which the soul is soon again brought into bondage. Religious thought became timorous; Origen was treated as a heretic. The episcopate assumed sacerdotal authority, and claimed the right to remit sins. Before its triumph there was a sharp conflict on the subject at Alexandria, Rome, and Carthage, in which the most illustrious teachers of the Church took part. Worship showed a tendency to return to Jewish separatism; the Eucharist became, according to Cyprian, an expiatory sacrifice, intended to supplement that which was left incomplete on Calvary. Men began to set up an ideal standard of Christian perfection, not to be reached under the conditions of ordinary family life; asceticism grew under the same influences which fostered sacerdotalism and the sacramentarian character of Christian worship. The synod of Antioch, which condemned Paul of Samosata, bore little resemblance to the free conferences of the preceding period, in which it was sought to win the heretic by moral suasion, for that synod called in the aid of the secular arm at a time when the emperor was still pagan.

Thus is inaugurated the entirely new period which commences with the fourth century. The Church acquires undoubtedly some splendour from her alliance with the Empire, but the protection thus gained is ever a precarious and uncertain thing, and even more fatal to the true interests of orthodoxy in its smiles than in its frowns. Great general councils take the place of the free conferences of the early synods, and questions of faith are settled by arbitrary decrees.

An outward and forced unity is gradually substituted for that living unity of soul which is alone of any real value. Pagan multitudes are simply handed over by the Empire to the Church, which is to subdue and mould them to her own likeness; nay, presently barbarous hordes are thrust into her ranks, whom she is first to baptise and then instruct. The rudeness of the disciple calls forth the despotism of the master, and thus tends to the complete development of the ecclesiastical authority by the constitution of the hierarchy.

The true spirit of Christianity is indeed still living even in this degenerate Judaised form, and it will in the end, in spite of all obstacles, build up a new civilisation on the ruins of the ancient world. But, given human nature and the barbarism of the age which followed the great invasions, it was not possible that the Church should maintain the spirituality and liberty of its early days. It was not preserved by any supernatural power from the dangerous influences of so corrupt an age; rather it was placed in the midst of them as a free moral agent exposed to the inevitable perils of liberty; but it was preserved from perishing by an inextinguishable principle of life within and still more above it, which brought light out of the densest darkness, and, finally, good out of evil, as by dearly bought experience it was gradually led back to the true principles of its origin. These principles, often forgotten, misconceived, or even formally repudiated, never ceased to work as a hidden leaven within the Church. To them it owes all the great reformatory movements which from the middle ages to this day have shaken it out of its lethargy. Therefore it is we must not lose hope even

in the darkest days, when the usurpations of the hierarchy seem to have reached their height, when enslaved consciences are brought under the sway of a gross and superstitious pietism, and in silence and in secret noble souls groan over the decay of true spiritual life. Let us be well assured that European Christianity must pass through yet another great crisis of renovation, unless it would give place to that old naturalism which, in our day, as eighteen centuries ago, does battle with the higher life of humanity. It claims to be some new thing, while in reality it is but the resurrection of paganism, without its symbols, since, like paganism, it deifies only force and matter. It must be ours to triumph over it, or to perish with all our civilisation, our rights, our liberties, our moral culture. Let it be clearly understood that in this conflict the victory will be not to a degenerate and enslaved Church, nor to a Church in which all the intellectual paradoxes of the age find free play, but to a renovated Christianity returning to the dauntless and heroic spirituality of its youth. May the image of such a Christianity be traced in some measure in this book, which has no other aim than to set it forth before the eyes of this generation.

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

NOTE A.—*On the separation of the Agape from the Lord's Supper, in consequence of the decree of Pliny the Younger.*

We will cite first the text of Pliny (lib. x. ep. xciv.): "Affirmabant autem alii, hunc fuisse summum vel culpæ suæ vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem, seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent." We have here Pliny's description of the first religious service on the Lord's Day, which was held in the morning, at the very hour of the Resurrection. It was opened by an alternating chant in praise of Jesus Christ. What are we to understand by the *solemn engagement* to avoid every evil act? The reference cannot be to the baptismal vow, which did not occur in the ordinary service, but is probably to the solemn exhortations addressed by the Christians to one another, to abstain from all evil; in other words, the allusion is to the preaching, which was not in those days restricted to one individual, but was shared by various members of the assembly. The Roman proconsul knew nothing of preaching; there was nothing of the kind in pagan worship; he did not know, therefore, how clearly and distinctly to describe it. But he is substantially correct. It was true that the Christians had, as a part of their worship, mutual exhortation to the practice of that which was good. This was the form assumed by the preaching of those days, which was always connected with the reading of Holy Scripture.

So much for the first gathering for worship, which Pliny describes to us in his own way. Let us pass on to the second Christian assembly, which is perfectly distinguishable, in his account, from

the first. "Quibus peractis (after the performance of the various acts of worship just enumerated) morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium." After the first morning gathering, then, the Christians separated. They assembled again to partake of a common and *innocent* repast. What can this repast be, if not that evening meal, well known in the apostolic age, which began with the Agape and concluded with the Lord's Supper? That it was not simply the Agape, but also the Lord's Supper, appears from the expression, *innocent repast*. The Christians laid stress on the innocent character of this feast, just because it was violently assailed by the pagans, who, taking literally the expression, "to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man," regarded the Lord's Supper as a sanguinary festival, a feast of Thyestes, as they said. (*Θυέστεια δεῖπνα*, Eusebius, "H.E." v. 1.) We entirely accept this interpretation of the passage of Pliny, which is that given by Nitsch ("Practische Theol." ii. 2), by Augustine ("Archæol." ii. 566), and Harnack ("Christliche Gemeindegottesdienst," p. 230). It was this second gathering which alone was suppressed after Pliny's edict against unlawful assemblies. "Quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo secundum mandata tua *hetærias* esse vetueram."

We know that these assemblies, forbidden by Trajan, were always accompanied by a meal taken together. The Christians then suppressed their sacramental feast, and reduced the Agape to the proportions of a simple family meal, observing the Lord's Supper from that time at the public morning worship. Subsequently, when the laws relating to these associations became more liberal, especially those having reference to the burial clubs, the public Agape was restored, but the Lord's Supper was not again connected with it. This continued to be observed in the morning service, as we see in the description given of it by Justin Martyr ("Apol." i. 67). We are then fully justified in saying that no violence is done to the meaning of Pliny's letter when it is regarded as evidence of that separation of the Lord's Supper from the Agape, which became so important in the history of Christian worship in the second century.

NOTE B.—*Liturgical conclusion of the first Epistle of Clement of Rome, from a new MS. discovered at Constantinople.*

Since writing the chapter in this volume on Worship, we have become acquainted with the important discovery made by Philotheus Bryennius, in the library of the monastery of the patriarch of Jerusalem at Constantinople, of a MS. which supplies all the omissions pointed out in the Alexandrine MS. of the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, by adding to it the complete text of the homily, given under the name of the same Father, and described as a Second Epistle to the Corinthians. We need not here advert to this curious document, which appears to go back to the latter part of the second century, the period when "Pastor Hermas" (of which we are constantly reminded by the style and thoughts of the writer) was exerting so great an influence in Rome.* We only select one point of interest in connection with the history of worship, namely, the fact that the homily is read instead of being merely spoken.† We find in it also a very marked distinction between the visible and the invisible and spiritual Church, which is marked by all the characters of a veritable hypostasis, never being confounded with the actual Church on earth, which may become a den of thieves.‡

The first Epistle is of great interest in its bearing on the history of Christian worship, from the supplementary portion of the text just found.

The genuineness of the letter is altogether beyond question. It is declared by all the critics to belong to the date we have assigned, that is, to the close of the first century, under the reign of Domitian.§

Among the many fragments of interest which we gather from the Constantinople manuscript, we place foremost the prayer which concluded the Epistle.‖ This is evidently the reproduction of the

* "Patrum apostol. Opera recensuer." Oscar de Guibhart, Adolph. Harnack, Theod. Zahm. Lipsiæ, Henriehs, 1876, §§ 9, 10, 11. See also "Clementis Romani Epistolæ," edid. Hilgenfeld. Lipsiæ, Weigel, 1876.

† Ὅστε ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφαὶ ἀναγινώσκω ὑμῖν ἐντευξιν. "2 Clem. ad Corinth." 19.

‡ Ἐσόμεθα ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς πρώτης τῆς πνευματικῆς, τῆς πρὸ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης ἐκτισμένης. Ibid. 14.

§ See "Early Years of Christianity," vol. ii. Martyrs and Apologists. Note A, Notes and Explanations."

‖ Chaps. lix.–lxxii.

prayer used in the public worship,* a free reproduction as might be expected of that primitive liturgy which, as Justin Martyr says, was fixed as to its general order but was not in fixed terms. In it we note all the elements of the prayers used in public worship, as we have enumerated these from the writings of Justin and from the Apostolical Constitutions.† Let us bear in mind that at this early period the distinction between the general worship, at which the catechumens as well as the faithful were present, and the private sacramental worship was not yet made, and that consequently many of the petitions, which in the third century are divided between the two prayers, are here blended in one. We have thus a living echo of the adoration offered by the Christians of Rome in the first century, and the first liturgical monument of the Christian Church. It is easy to estimate the value of such a document, till recently unknown. We reproduce, as a whole, this ancient prayer of the Church of Rome :—

"Let us pray with constant and earnest supplication that the Creator of all things may preserve unbroken the fixed number of His elect in the world, by His dear Son Jesus Christ, by whom He has called us from darkness to light, from ignorance to the knowledge of His glorious name. Our hope is in Thy name, Author of all created life,‡ Thou who hast opened the eyes of our heart to know Thee, Thee the only Great One among the great, the only Holy One among the holy. Thou dost abase the proud, Thou dost overthrow the thoughts of the wise, Thou dost lift up the lowly, Thou enrichest and Thou makest poor, Thou givest life and death, Thou art the Benefactor of all souls, the God of all that is. Thou lookest down from the height of Thy holiness, Thou regardest all the actions of men, Thou art the Helper of those who are in danger, the Saviour of those in despair, the Creator and Preserver of all souls.§ It is Thou who hast multiplied the nations upon the earth, and chosen out of them all those that love Thee by Jesus Christ, Thy well-beloved Son, by whom Thou hast taught us, sanctified us, honoured

* Αἰτησόμεθα ἐκτενῆ τὴν δέησιν καὶ ἱκεσίαν ποιούμενοι. "1 Clem. ad Corinth." 59.

† Justin, "Apol." i. 65–67. Tertullian, "Apol." 30. "Patrum apost. opera." Edit. Guibhart, note to p. 98.

‡ Ἀρχέγονον πάσης κτίσεως. "1 Clem. ad. Corinth," 59.

§ Κτίστην καὶ ἐπίσκοπον. Ibid.

us. We pray Thee, O Lord, be our help and stay. Save those of us who are in affliction; have pity on the humble, raise the fallen, reveal Thyself to the wretched, heal the sick, bring back to Thyself the erring ones of Thy people. Feed the hungry, deliver our captives, give strength to the weak, comfort the fearful ones,* and may all the nations know that Thou alone art God, and that Jesus Christ is Thy Son, and that we are Thy people and the sheep of Thy fold.

"Thou hast manifested Thy power in all the ordinances of nature. After having created this world, O Lord, Thy faithfulness has continued throughout all generations. Thou art just in Thy judgments, glorious in strength and majesty.

"Thy wisdom is shown forth in the creation of all living things, Thy knowledge in their preservation. Thou art full of goodness and mercy towards those whom Thou dost save, ever faithful to those who put their trust in Thee. God of all pity and compassion, forgive our iniquity, unrighteousness, and sin. Impute not their trespasses to Thy servants and handmaids, but purify us by Thy truth. Make us to walk in tenderness of heart, and to be fruitful in all good works as under Thine eye, and the eye of our rulers.† Yea, Lord, cause Thy face to shine upon us, that we may enjoy the blessings of peace. Cover us with Thy powerful hand and let the strength of Thine arm deliver us from iniquity, and save us from those who hate us without a cause.‡ Give peace and concord to us, and to all the dwellers upon earth, as Thou didst to our fathers who called on Thee in sincerity and truth, when Thou hadst made them obedient to Thine almighty and glorious name.

"It is Thou who of Thine ineffable majesty hast given the power to rule to our leaders and governors, so that we, acknowledging that their honour and glory are of Thee, should submit ourselves to them, according to Thy will. Grant them, Lord, health, strength, peace, and safety, that they may duly use the power Thou hast given them; for, O Lord of heaven, eternal King, Thou hast given to the sons of men, glory, honour, and authority over all creatures upon earth. Direct their thoughts into the way of righteousness in thy presence, so that they, administering in peace, in patience, and piety, the power Thou hast given them, may find Thee favourable

* *Παρακάλεσον τοὺς ὀλιγοψυχοῦντας.* "1 Clem. ad. Corinth," 59.
† *Ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀρχόντων ὑμῶν.* Ibid. 60.
‡ *Καὶ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν μισούντων ἡμᾶς ἀδίκως.* Ibid.

to them. Thou alone canst grant us these and all other blessings. We praise Thee by Jesus Christ, our High Priest, the Master of our souls, by whom be glory and majesty unto Thee, world without end. Amen."

NOTE C.—*The Council of Laodicea on Silent Prayer.*

Although the Council of Laodicea belongs to a date long subsequent to the period we are treating, we do not hesitate with Augusti to find in the canon which speaks of silent prayer and prayer by acclamation the trace of a custom dating as far back as the time of Justin Martyr. That Father, indeed, speaks of a common prayer offered by all the Christians at the commencement of the service. Now, unless we suppose that they all prayed aloud at once, which would have made an intolerable confusion of sounds, we must allow that this prayer was offered in silence; and as the principal subjects to be embraced in it are indicated, it may be inferred that these were enumerated by the officiating minister, and confirmed in some way by the acclamation of the assembly. The Canon of Laodicea gives, therefore, the reasonable explanation of the passage of Justin.

NOTE D.—*Recent writings of Overbeck on the Church and Slavery.*

There has lately appeared an interesting paper on the relations between the Church and Slavery, in the "Studien zur Geschichte der alten Kirche," by Franz Overbeck. First edition. Schloss Chemitz. Schweilzer, 1875. In it the author maintains that Christianity did not oppose slavery as an institution, but simply sought to modify it from a religious point of view, passing by altogether its social aspect. So far our view coincides with his, but we hold that the religious aspect of the question would have a stronger influence upon the social than this writer is prepared to admit. We have cited texts which show that the Church had at least aimed at a complete social reformation, until it was checked in its aspirations by union with the Empire.

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